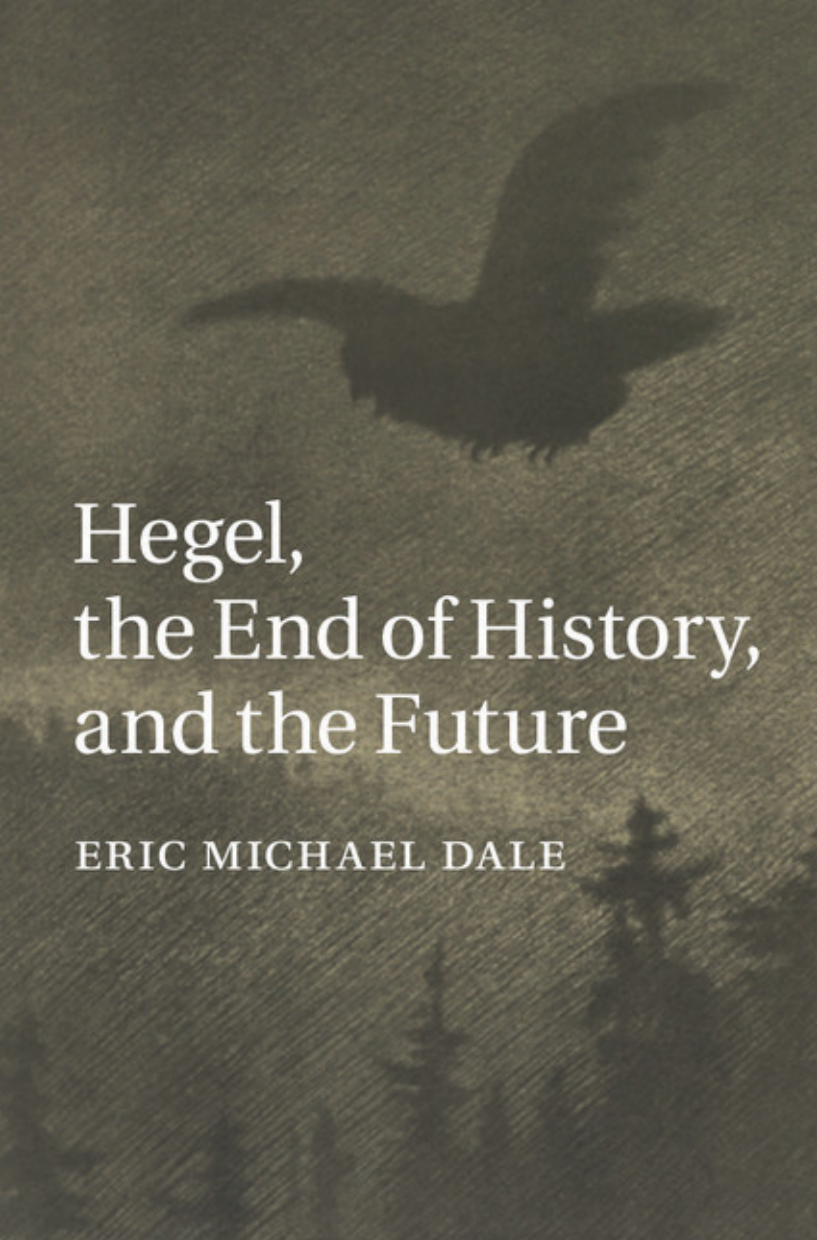


Hegel, the End of History, and the Future

ERIC MICHAEL DALE

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In *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1806) Hegel is often held to have announced the end of history, where "history" is to be understood as the long pursuit of ends towards which humanity had always been striving. In this, the first book in English to thoroughly critique this entrenched view, Eric Michael Dale argues that it is a misinterpretation. Dale offers a reading of his own, showing how it sits within the larger schema of Hegel's thought and makes room for an understanding of the "end of history" as Hegel intended. Through an elegant analysis of Hegel's philosophy of history, Dale guides the reader away from the common misinterpretation of the "end of history" to other valuable elements of Hegel's arguments which are often overlooked and deserve to endure. His book will be of great interest to scholars and advanced students of Hegel, the philosophy of history, and the history of political thought.

ERIC MICHAEL DALE is Affiliated Faculty Professor in Philosophy at Emerson College, Boston. He has written many articles for journals such as *Existenz: An International Journal in Philosophy, Religion, Politics, and the Arts; Animus: The Canadian Journal of Philosophy and Humanities*; and *IWM Post*. He is also a former visiting fellow at the Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen in Vienna.

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To A. M. O.
"And I have much for which to thank him, for what I did not know I learned from him, and what I knew already I did not forget." St. Jerome, *Epist. ad Pam. et Oceanus* LXXXIV

To J. W. D. and R. M. D.
For their love and support over the years

To M. B. D.
For everything

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Abbreviations

Aristotle *An. Post.*	Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*
Aristotle *An. Pr.*	Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*
Aristotle *Meta*.	Aristotle, *Metaphysics*
Aristotle *Nic. Eth.*	Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
Aristotle *Phys.*	Aristotle, *Physics*
DK	*Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*
Engels *MEC*	Engels, *Marx and Engels: Correspondence*
Engels *MECW*	*Marx and Engels: Collected Works*
Engels *MEW*	Marx and Engels, *Werke im 42 Bände*
Engels *MEWEr*	Marx and Engels, *Werke im 42 Bände, Ergänzungsbänden*
Fichte *SW*	Fichte, *Sämtliche Werke*
Hegel *EL*	Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*
Hegel *GW*	Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*
Hegel *Letters*	*Hegel: The Letters*
Hegel *VPR*	Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*
Hegel *VPW*	Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte: Band I*
Hegel *Werke*	Hegel, *Werke im Zwanzig Bänden*
Heidegger *GA*	Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*
Heidegger *SZ*	Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*
Herder *SW*	Herder, *Sämtliche Werke im 33 Bände*
Hölderlin *GSA*	*Hölderlins Sämtliche Werke*. Große Stuttgarter Ausgabe
Hölderlin *KSA*	Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*. Kleiner Stuttgarter Ausgabe
Kant *GS*	Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*
Kant *KrV*	Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*
Kierkegaard *Pap.*	*Søren Kierkegaards Papier*
Nietzsche *KGB*	Nietzsche, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Briefe*
Nietzsche *KGW*	Nietzsche, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Werke*
Nietzsche *KSA*	Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe*
Nietzsche *SB*	Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Briefe: Kritische Studienausgabe*
Nietzsche *SW*	Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*
Rousseau *CG*	*Correspondance générale de J.-J. Rousseau*

Rousseau *ŒC*	Rousseau, *Œuvres complètes*
Schelling *SW*	Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke*
Schopenhauer *SW*	Schopenhauer, *Sämtliche Werke*
Voltaire *ŒI*	Voltaire, *Œuvres inédites*

Introduction

> Gideon Rose, Editor of *Foreign Affairs*: You and your country have lived through a lot of history over the years, a lot of epic ideological and geopolitical conflict. Will Poland's future be as turbulent as its past, or have you reached an equilibrium that will allow you to have a normal national life?
>
> Radosław Sikorski, Poland's Minister of Foreign Affairs: Indeed, both the Second World War and Solidarity started in Gdansk. The twentieth century was a roller coaster for Poland, regaining independence after World War I, then losing it and getting ethnically cleansed by Stalin and Hitler together, and then 45 years of struggle for democracy. Hopefully, we'll produce less history than in the past. Geopolitically, we are having the best time in 300 years. And we are now contributing to other countries' stability, being a source of European solutions.
>
> Rose: So Poland is finally at the "end of history"?
>
> Sikorski: *Inshallah*, as they say.
>
> Radosław Sikorski, "The Polish Model: A Conversation with Radek Sikorski." *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2013

There is a well-known story which lives on wherever Hegel is studied. There are variations of this tale, depending on who tells it and what their reasons are for passing on the tale, but the account typically runs something like this: as Hegel completed his first great work, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, in 1806, an old world was coming to an end, and a new one was about to begin. Bonaparte's forces had crushed the Prussian armies of Friedrich Wilhelm III at the battle of Jena on 14 October, effectively bringing to an end the Prussian feudal system that had animated the Holy Roman Empire, in one form or another, since Otto I was crowned Emperor of Italy in 982. The liberal reforms which Prussia's critics had long called for were forced upon her as a result of her defeats – and just as Napoleon's victories over the Germans brought about the end of historical tyranny and despotism in continental Europe, so Hegel's *Phenomenology* ushered in the final chapter in Western philosophical history. Hegel's work announced the arrival of absolute freedom and, in effect, the end of history – not history in the sense of the succession of discrete events, which of course would continue, but *history* in the sense of the long pursuit of the ends towards

which humanity had always been striving. This type of history, which one might call *philosophical* history, ended the moment that the *political* revolution (which had begun with the Revolution of 1789) and the *philosophical* revolution (inaugurated by Hegelian thought) met as one, on the eve of the battle of Jena. Hegel claims to have glimpsed Napoleon at Jena, writing to his friend Niethammer, "I saw the Emperor – this world-soul – riding out from the city on reconnaissance. It is indeed a wonderful sensation to see such an individual who … astride a horse, reaches out over the world, and masters it" (Hegel *Letters* 306). Hegel hailed Bonaparte's "mastery" as the completion of the revolutionary epoch in the assertion of universal rights and autonomy in the face of the old world of privilege, inheritance, and bondage. And in the same vein, whereas Napoleon's victories announced political liberty, Hegel's *Phenomenology* announced spiritual or intellectual liberty, the freedom long sought by humanity. Moreover, Hegel's was the *absolute* philosophy, because it finally achieved what he termed *absolute* knowing: "This last form of spirit, a spirit which gives its complete and true content in the form of the self and through this likewise realizes its own concept, while remaining within its own concept; this is absolute knowing [*das absolute Wissen*]" (Hegel *Werke* 3:582). All that remained for the future was to universalize the political victories of Napoleon and the philosophical victories of Hegel. History, in the sense of the progress of spirit into freedom, was at an end.

In broad outline, this is the tale of Hegel's end of history thesis. Many of the political components in the tale are correct, particularly the reliance of the end of history thesis on its proximity to the French Revolution. The philosophical components, however, are deeply problematic. Though evocative, the image of a sequestered Hegel struggling to give birth to the philosophical equivalent of the very battle raging at his doorstep as he penned the final lines of the *Phenomenology* does not do justice to the actual content of Hegel's philosophy, not to mention the fact that it is simply untrue. It is true that, as a member of the "revolutionary generation" of 1765–75 (a generation which included Hegel, his friends Friedrich Hölderlin and Friedrich Schelling, as well as Beethoven, Wordsworth, and Bonaparte himself), Hegel understood his work as an integral part of the political and historical movements of the time. Indeed it is impossible to make sense of the end of history discussion if Hegel's philosophical claims are divorced from the political movements which paralleled them. Yet according to Ritter (1982: 61) Hegel's philosophy "proves itself to be the settlement of the problem posed by the Revolution that the continuity of world history no longer stands and is broken for it as well as for its restorative opponents. What emerges with the new age and the revolution is for both the end of former history; the future has no relation to tradition." Ritter is correct, the future is not the realm of the philosopher, according to Hegel, but not because the future is unimportant. Rather, because the philosopher is not a prophet (Hegel *VPW* 210), the future is not philosophy's to command; "the

face of the thinker is turned toward the historical, that is, toward the past and the passing present; nothing is more false than the popular belief that Hegelians believed they could foresee the future like a prophet" (Schmitt 1988: 61). Of course, even a cursory reading of Hegel's work shows that Hegel did in fact believe that his philosophy occupied a position of privilege, for he declares at the end of his *Philosophy of History*, "thus far has consciousness come" (Hegel *Werke* 12:539) – that is, Hegel's explication of the philosophy of world history stands for him as the culmination of the story of human consciousness. Hegel understood his philosophy to stand as a culmination of the entire philosophical endeavor begun by Heraclitus and the Greeks millennia ago. It would be disingenuous to deny this aspect of Hegel's totalizing thought, and this alone has often served as reason enough to dismiss the insights of his philosophy of history. If Hegel truly believed that his thought heralded the end of history, a charitable reading would be to simply shake one's head and try to make better sense of some other element of Hegel's philosophy.

Yet claims about Hegel's end of history thesis always leave out more than they include. To mention only three important examples: such claims never take into account Hegel's very clear strictures against philosophy turning into prophecy (Hegel *VPW* 210), they fail to address the brief but crucial statements Hegel makes about the possible course of world spirit in the New World or in Russia (Hegel *Werke* 12:107ff.), and they forget that history comes to be what it is within Hegel's larger schema of thought. "Poking fun at the lecture cycle on the philosophy of history is easier than understanding it, because it … only makes sense in its context," says Bungay (1994: 36). "History is 'placed' in the system, so systematics must come first, for it is only in the system that Hegel says what he thinks history is." Historical spirit "strides ever forwards," Hegel remarks, "because only spirit is progress. Often it seems to have forgotten and lost itself; but inwardly opposed to itself, it is inwardly working forward … until strong in itself it bursts asunder the crust of earth which divided it from the sun, its concept [*seine Begriffe*], so that the earth crumbles away" (Hegel *Werke* 20:456). Beneath Hegel's Platonic imagery here of the sun and the ἰδέα (cf. *Republic* 508a–b; 514a–515e) lies his basic Aristotelian openness to the world; and while like Aristotle Hegel is thoroughly teleological, the proposed end (τέλος) he envisions is always beyond philosophy's grasp, because it is the futural end, the *eschaton* (ἔσχατα), as in the Pythian oracle's idiomatic τὰ ἔσχατα γαίης or "ends of the earth" as an unachievable goal (Herodotus, *Hist.*7:140), or the Septuagint's τὰ ἔσχατα της θαλάσσης, the "uttermost parts of the sea" (Ps. 139:9) which only God can plumb. Within the Hegelian dialectic, we have no access to *das Ende* as such because it is always approaching and receding according to its own historical logic. At the same time, there *are* ends in Hegelian thought, even something *like* an end of history. While Part I of this book is dedicated to tracing and exposing the "myth of the end of history"

in Hegel, in Part II I undertake an interpretation of Hegelian philosophy of history that makes room for the proper sorts of ends Hegel's thought envisions. He conceives of the "end" as a culmination of history, because for Hegel, the end or τέλος is the larger, proleptically realized yet historically unattainable ἔσχατον. When Hegel speaks of the end, it is important to understand just what sort of end he envisions.

Along with questions about the end, Hegel also raises the question of historical progress. The question of progress is a vexed one in Hegel's philosophy. On the one hand, few if any philosophers so thematize progress in their thought. But just as we have to ask what sort of "end" Hegel envisions within his philosophy (and what role his philosophy plays in that end), so also must we ask what sort of "progress" Hegel champions. It will come as a surprise to some that Hegel in fact is not a blind devotee of inevitable human political and spiritual progress. Every age has these apostles of progress; Hegel is not one of them, though over the centuries many of them have cited him as their standard-bearer. For Hegel, everything that happens of any import is *immanent*, a process internal to whatever phenomenon he is studying. Immanent progress, i.e. the process of something becoming what it is, is not the same thing as transcendent progress (Latin *transcendere*, "to climb"), a progress that rises above. Hegel is not the philosopher of transcendence. His great concern is to understand the inner workings of phenomena, an Aristotelian fascination with the universals that exists *in re* and work themselves out in time and history. Interpreters who locate an end of history in Hegel believe that they are adhering to a fundamentally top-down Hegelian idea of a transcendent idea which manifests itself within the course of human history. But that is (arguably) Plato, not Hegel; one should (almost) never read Hegel as a Platonist. The end of history rests upon a Platonic interpretation, wherein a preordained universal plan is made concrete within human life. Hegel's language and images (the cunning of reason, the world-soul) feed into this reading, until he becomes a caricature of himself, blithely plotting the course of the world spirit across the bloody pages of history, paying little attention to the actual course of events, and no attention at all to the violence the spirit leaves in its wake. This reading leaves us thinking Hegel either a buffoon or a monster, or perhaps both.

History does not progress – "only spirit is progress," Hegel writes (Hegel *Werke* 20:456). This is a nuanced but vital point that must not be overlooked. Hegel does speak of progressions within history, but not of an overall progress of history beyond his own philosophy and its own time. The Hegelian end is the culmination of the *now*; not the foreclosure of the *next*. Hegel's statement that "only spirit is progress" and others like it are not isolated sayings which Hegel makes in the process of trying to cover every inch of the globe with his philosophy of absolute spirit. In fact, many of them are among the most commented upon in the Hegelian corpus, such as the famous comment in the Preface to the

Rechtsphilosophie about philosophy coming on the scene too late to give historical direction (*Werke* 7:28). Hegel's statements about the possible future openness of the movement of human and historical spirit betray something of a significant counter-trend in Hegelian philosophy, towards open-ended possibility and *away* from the completeness and comprehensiveness his philosophy otherwise claims, and therefore allow us to attempt a reading of Hegel *contra* Hegel. As I detail aspects of the context and development of Hegel's philosophy of history, these junctures of openness will begin to appear. I develop these open places in Hegel's philosophy in order to cast light on the meaning of Hegel's claim to stand at the end of history. It will become clear that when read carefully, no such end of history thesis can be found in Hegel's philosophy. This is not to dismiss the very real notion of *culmination* which is an important part of Hegelian thought. However, culmination is not end (properly speaking it is *an* end but not *the* end), and to mistake the two is to do grave injustice to the whole of Hegel's philosophy. Also, because Hegel explicitly ties his philosophy of history – which is supposed to represent his "end of history thesis" in its fullest mode – to the theological idea of theodicy and the justification of evil in history, one cannot understand Hegel's philosophy of history apart from an attempt to get at what he means by human finitude and the contingency of evil. History and evil are bound up in a complex relationship in Hegel's work, and to appreciate this relationship, one has to try and understand exactly what Hegel does and does not say, and why.

There is no way to grasp Hegelian philosophy from the outside. Hegel's influence upon every strain of European philosophy since his time is greater than any other philosopher, even Kant, and as such he is too close, even to his harshest critics, for a balanced appraisal. Phenomenology, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, Western Marxism, *Historismus*, existentialism, British idealism, hermeneutics, psychoanalytic theory, structuralism, post-structuralism and deconstruction, French feminism, critical theory: all of these are watered by Hegelian springs; and if some of them find the water stale or tepid, they drink nonetheless. Heidegger's advice remains sound: "If we wish to confront Hegel, then the demand lies upon us to be 'akin' to him" (Heidegger *GA* 32:44). The rift between analytic and continental philosophy arises first with Hegel, and debates over his influence, successors, and place in the canon. Hegel's influence over theology, particularly Protestant thought, is immense and seems to resurface in every new generation. Hegel has many kin. But not everyone, even among his own kin, agrees that Hegel can still open up new possibilities. I believe that he still can do so, and in profound ways. The present work is intended to stand in the tradition of Hegelian interpretation which denies that Hegel forecloses possibilities for the future in his thought. This means that, though Hegel will be criticized throughout the work, at its heart my study serves an apologetic function.

Although it is best to let this book stand on its own, it may be useful to situate my approach to Hegel within the larger world of scholarship. The reader will quickly note that I consider Hegel in tandem with Aristotle at nearly every juncture in the argument. I believe that many of the most vexing problems plaguing Hegel scholarship would be largely ameliorated by paying close attention to the parallels between Hegel's conceptual views and those of Aristotle. It would not be wrong to locate this book within the metaphysical camp of Hegel interpretation, but only because, like Aristotle, Hegel's work is best understood as a whole, and taking various works out of the system leaves out what, for Hegel, is most important. Yet Hegel's philosophy continually slips outside the boundaries he surveys for it, particularly where an end of some sort might preclude futural possibility. To that extent as well, this book is an exercise of reading Hegel *contra* Hegel; or at least, *contra* the traditional metaphysical Hegel with his spirit monism and transcendent inevitabilities. Since that commits me to an anti-metaphysical metaphysical Hegel, I shall then have to explain what I think is going on within Hegel's teleology, and why it isn't a bad thing, properly understood, and how all this makes sense of his philosophy of history without having my Heideggerian membership card revoked. Part II of the book records my attempt. With Malabou (2005), I affirm that Hegel does have a future – that is, he takes the future seriously, and that there is still a future for Hegelian philosophy.

Hegel nowhere says that his philosophy represents the end of history as commonly understood by philisophers and political scientistics; his few statements to that effect have been misunderstood or used in a way incongruent with the overall philosophical system. What we are left with, then, is the question as to whether or not this is what Hegel *meant*, even if it is not what he *said*. The idea that he does mean this arises from a few key later interpretations of Hegel. This study is dedicated to showing why those interpretation are, and must always remain, false. The overall plan of this study is quite simple. In Part I, I will take up the idea of the end of history in Hegel and demonstrate how certain key early interpretations of his work helped to give rise to the widespread belief that Hegel indeed taught that history had reached its end with his thought. The two most important nineteenth-century sources for the end of history thesis in Hegel are Friedrich Engels (1820–95) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). In his *Untimely Meditations* (1873–76), Nietzsche laments Hegel's apotheosis of historical consciousness, and remarks that for Hegel, "the apex and terminus of world history coincided with his own Berlin existence" (Nietzsche *SW* 1:308). Engels believes that while Hegel does not "sharply" delineate the end of the historical process, he "nevertheless finds himself compelled to supply this process with an end, just because he has to bring his system to a close at some point or other" (Engels *MEW* 21:268). In other words, both Nietzsche and Engels think that the systematic nature of Hegel's thought involves him in

an evitable claim that history must end with his system. This reading of Hegel's philosophy of history, and its relation to Marx's interpretation of Hegel, has been decisive for virtually all later interpreters, and played no small role in the philosophical development of the most important twentieth-century advocate of an end of history thesis in Hegel, Alexandre Kojève (1902–68). I locate Kojève's reading of Hegel within the long tradition of interpretation stretching back to Nietzsche and Engels, in order to show that the end of history, whatever it might mean for Hegel, is not at all what it means for Kojève *et al.* This discussion will clear the ground for a serious investigation in Part II of what Hegel actually means by history and the end of history, by way of comparisons with the historical philosophies of Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) and Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814). Having established the important links Hegel's work has with the writings of Herder and Fichte, I am better positioned to show just what Hegel is doing in his philosophy of history, which makes up the remainder of the study.

Hegel's philosophy represents an eternal tension between the *dialektisch* (διαλεκτική, a natural process of conflict) and the *spekulative* (θεωρία, a spiritual or *geistig* vision of totality). Hegel's great attempt in his philosophy is to reconcile this dual tension, to eliminate the contingency of dialectical history with a comprehensive way of seeing the world via spirit, a speculative vision of totality. Let me say at the beginning of this book that Hegel's great attempt is a failure; in that sense, this book recapitulates Croce's attempt to find "what is living and what is dead" in Hegel's philosophy, in this case the philosophy of history. Croce locates the great, insurmountable dualism in "the profound distinction which Hegel makes between nature and spirit, and which he affirms as the distinction between an unconscious and conscious logicity" (Croce 1915: 198). Following Croce, Alison Stone has argued that the best way to understand the tensions within Hegel's concepts of nature and spirit is to see how "Hegel organizes the stages of nature on the same model as the forms of consciousness. This is no coincidence, since he identifies both domains as starting from initial states with corresponding structures and contradictions" (Stone 2004: 52). Stone understands Hegelian philosophy of nature from a strongly a priori point of view, and she makes a compelling argument. My concern here is a bit different. I do not try and reconcile Hegelian spirit with Hegelian history, because for Hegel, history is not to be understood in an a priori fashion. That is Fichte's approach, which I detail in Chapter 6. History is always the realm of the contingent for Hegel, and his philosophy of history is his attempt to overcome the contingency of history within his larger category of spirit. But because spirit proceeds and develops dialectically, it requires the contradictions of history in order to be what it is. Therefore, against Hegel's best insights, those contradictions cannot be dialectically overcome; they are crucial to the dialectic of history as Hegel (rightly) understands it. Since the

dialectic is ongoing, necessarily, history cannot be brought to an end, and Hegel's attempt to offer his philosophy of history as a theodic explanation of historical contingency founders upon the very dialectical necessity which gives rise to the problem in the first place. Hegel cannot end history, and therefore no theodic explanation is possible. Hegel's heroic effort to "eliminate contingency" (Hegel *VPW* 29) is doomed to failure. Yet that must not count against him, in the end. In fact, the lasting power of Hegelian thought results from its failure to ever come to a full stop, that is, in its inability to close itself off to the dialectical movement that is its driving force. Hegel's great failure, this irreconcilable struggle, is the starting point for every European philosophy since his time. His great failure is the crucible of worlds.

My treatment of Hegelian terminology and Hegelian German requires some small mention. In citing Hegel and in translating his German, I make it a point *not* to capitalize such prominent terms as *being* [*Sein*], the *absolute* [*das Absolute*], *spirit* [*der Geist*], and so forth, unless the context cries out for such a translation. In doing this I hope to allow his language to speak (insofar as an interpretation is able: *traduttore, traditore*), without the encrustations of philosophical interpretation which can all too often get in the way in a translation. There is no reason to make Hegel any harder than he has to be; in fact, Hegel's systematic way of thinking and writing makes him a remarkably clear (which is not to say *easy*) thinker, once one has a grasp of the overall idea he is treating and the way in which he uses language. In fact, Hegel has no time for such obfuscations: "these days we often see an expression which precisely denotes a concept disdained in favor of one which … shrouds the concept in a fog and therefore sounds more uplifting" (Hegel *Werke* 3:54). Translating German philosophy into English with Portentous Capitalization generates "overterms," frighteningly weighty hypostatizations which cloud the meaning Hegel wants to convey (which is not always easy to grasp in the original, or with a flawless translation). Is this unwarranted license? After all, these terms have a "fixed" and "authoritative" place in Hegel's system, do they not? We all know that the Absolute is Hegel's way of speaking about the Totality of his Intellectual Pantheism, which is identified with Spirit (or better, Mind, another preferred translation), the Movement of this Pantheistic Oversoul through History, which is identical with Being itself, don't we (or We)? Perhaps not. In actuality, these terms mean different things in the course of Hegel's thought, and while there is a uniformity of use, it is better to understand them as the common terms that they were (and are, in German), put to different usage in order to explain the complex web of relationships which emerge in the course of Hegelian thought. After all, it is Heidegger, not Hegel, that more often than not coins a new word in order to explain a new or forgotten concept – and Heideggerian overterms are far more daunting.

The concepts Hegel is trying to explain, however, are not forgotten or new, as far as he is concerned. They are everyday events and unfoldings which have to be explained absolutely, that is, "scientifically" or systematically so that their meaning becomes evident. For example, *der Geist* carries with it the commonplace meaning of "spirit" as in a spirited debate (the spirit that "inhabits" the debate, gives it meaning and a life of its own, so to speak), or a spirit of fellow-feeling like the French *esprit* which binds people together around a common goal or project, as well as the spirit or character of a people, even to the point of cliché (the "American can-do spirit"). These understandings of spirit are not ancillary to Hegel's philosophical meaning, but in fact deeply inform his meaning, and should inform our understanding of his terms. Especially for this study, which treats of Hegel's philosophy of history, the historical or temporal meanings of his terms should be given full weight, without imposing upon them overbearing ideas which have more to do with the fact that all nouns are capitalized in German, than how Hegel might have written had he written in English. Because I extensively retranslate from German, I will use English standards as far as possible to translate Hegel, and that means leaving his nouns lower case, unless specific reason to capitalize them presents itself. I often wonder how differently the course of German scholarship in English might have gone, had the convention of capitalizing every important term in the philosophical arsenal not taken hold early on. Without a doubt, reading Hegel with the overterms muted leaves a very different impression on the mind. However we feel about his system, we should not cloud it with translations which imply the presence of Presences lurking in the background, ready to sublate anything and everything into a higher preservation of Universal Spirit.

No more need be said about the proper manner in which to translate and understand Hegel's philosophical language. My reading of Hegel will have to convince on its own merits, and will do so or not regardless of how I have translated this or that word or concept. Paul Redding (1996: 246) points out that "the resurgence of interest in Hegelian thought characteristic of the last few decades has been largely concerned with working a way out of the labyrinth of those traditional interpretations which have dominated the reception of Hegel but which are now being increasingly recognized as inadequate to his thought." This book is a hopeful contribution to that ongoing work. Hegel's account of events is his own, and must be read that way and within his own context. The philosophical thought which undergirds his account, however, is a meaningful one apart from the uses to which Hegel puts it. Hegel's philosophy of history should be understood not as a once-for-all summation of history and time, but as an account of the process of historical change itself. Viewed in opposition to the totalizing lures of thought which constrain it from within, and read with an eye towards Hegel's openness to the future and its possibilities, Hegelian thought is still a powerful resource for revaluing historical claims about the

present and future. Hegel's great concern in his philosophy of history is not to achieve the end of history, but to explain and finally eliminate contingency and the perception of loss within history. In a phrase I will invoke frequently in this study, Hegel says that "philosophical reflection has no other purpose than the elimination of the contingent" (Hegel *VPW* 29). By contingency, Hegel means external necessity, and within the context of the philosophy of history, Hegel is talking about explaining an internal essential drive to history which cannot be affected by something accidental.

Though I defend Hegel against misinterpretations of his philosophy of history, I do not think that Hegel is successful in eliminating the contingent, nor do I think that he could ever be. However, I do not want to begin this study with a negative assessment of Hegel in this Introduction. "The beginning is not what one finds first; the point of departure must be reached, it must be won," according to Ricoeur (1967: 348), and so by indicating that I think Hegel's overall project in his philosophy of history is a failure, I mean to free up the study to find what is valuable in Hegel's philosophy of history. The apologetic function of this study is also its critical function. Hegel's failures are not what are usually considered failures, and the successes I find in Hegel, and present in this study, are not what are usually considered Hegelian successes. For example, Hegel's dependence upon mediation, finitude, and contingency is both the greatest strength of his philosophy as well as a guarantee that he will never be able to overcome contingency in any absolute position, such as he argues for in the philosophy of history. The airtight completeness for which Hegelian metaphysics is justly renowned and justly feared is constantly undermined by the power of the equally renowned Hegelian dialectic, which moves forever forward and is eternally enfolding and unfolding new strata of meaning and creating new kinds of value in the world. "Misconstrued, treated lightly, Hegelianism only extends its historical domination, finally unfolding its immense enveloping resources without obstacle," according to Derrida, a careful reader of Hegel. "Hegelian self-evidence seems lighter than ever at the moment when it finally bears down with its full weight" (Derrida 1978: 251). Cognizant of the danger of the weight of Hegel, in this study I suggest a way to get out from under some of the effects of the weight without treating it lightly. What is needed is a more *humble* reading of Hegel, if such a thing is possible. To do this without doing unconscionable damage to the integrity of the Hegelian system is a difficult undertaking, but by considering key points of Hegel's works in turn, a picture of Hegelian philosophy and Hegel's notion of the "end" emerges which is at odds with received Hegelian orthodoxy. By taking Hegel seriously and at his word, I undertake to read Hegel contra Hegel in order to see what his thought can still tell us about history and humanity. For Hegel still has much to say.

Part I

Hegel and the end of history

We can think the *historicity* of certain multiples, but we cannot think *a* History. The practical – political – consequences of this conception are considerable, because they set out a differential topology of action. The idea of an overturning whose origin would be a state of totality is imaginary. Every radical transformational action originates *in a point*, which, inside a situation, is an evental site.

Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, 2005

Hegelian self-evidence seems lighter than ever at the moment when it finally bears down with its full weight.

Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 1978

πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει

Heraclitus, in Plato, *Cratylus* 402a

1 The end of history as a question and a problem

> It is precisely because these choices could have been different that legitimacy is conferred – or withdrawn – by their outcome. History is the name we put to choices made.
>
> Philip Bobbitt, *The Shield of Achilles*, 2002

Hegel is a thinker whose best years are ahead of him. In the last decades of the twentieth century, various movements in both continental and Anglo-American philosophy began systematic reappraisals of Hegelian philosophy which continued into the first decades of the twenty-first. Major publishers have brought out new critical editions and translations of his works, and a Hegelian publishing renaissance has been underway unmatched since the mid nineteenth century. Political thinkers have plumbed Hegel's writings for insights into the trajectory of human history; religious scholars have looked to Hegel to explain the persistence of religion within diverse cultural forms; ethicists have noted the striking similarity between Hegelian *Sittlichkeit* and Aristotelian virtue ethics; economists have christened and rechristened Hegel a capitalist, a socialist, a communist; and philosophers of all stripes have engaged in debates about Hegel and the status of his metaphysical system – is Hegel metaphysical after all? Non-metaphysical? Post-metaphysical? Appropriately, not all of these reappraisals have been positive; post-metaphysical, post-structuralist, and post-colonial forms of philosophy have all taken aim at Hegel and the Hegelian legacy in one way or the other, and have mounted new criticisms and interpretations which live and breathe within the deep structure of contemporary philosophy. Yet Hegel's most vocal new critics and his most vocal new disciples work from a single assumption: Hegel has been misread and misinterpreted, oftentimes innocently, sometimes intentionally, and therefore Hegelian philosophy deserves a new day. This is why we must always heed Inwood's (2002: 521) warning that "the criticism of Hegel is an intricate matter. However glaring the flaw may appear, there is always the possibility that Hegel has been misunderstood or indeed that he is one or more steps ahead of his critics." Hegel's new day may be a true reckoning of justice for what is *actually* wrong with Hegel's thought, a day to finally bury the old man for the right reasons this

time; or the day may be a true *Morgendämmerung* of Hegelian truth undimmed by the cloudy assumptions of nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophy. More likely, the new day for Hegel will be a mixture of both praise and blame. But whatever form the new day for Hegel brings, that Hegel has a future is no longer up for debate.

What that future will be, however, is still greatly debated. Part of the irony of discussing Hegel and the future is that Hegel is perhaps best known in non-philosophical circles for his idea that history, and perhaps philosophy, has ended. This is the question with which my study begins, then: why the end of history? Not the concrete details; those are the subject of later chapters, for it is not enough to simply name and dismiss the question, the historical, textual, and intellectual sources of the question have to be plumbed. The concrete birth and subsequent history of the end of history is tricky to lay out, but once done, the textual problem vanishes: Hegel has no end of history thesis in his work. So what is the lure of the end of history? It is a powerful image with immense explanatory value, however misguided it is, and it has a long history stemming from the work of some of the nineteenth century's greatest thinkers. The other side to Whitehead's dictum about interest and truth seems not to be the case when it comes to Hegel and the end of history: "of course, a true proposition is more apt to be interesting than a false one" (Whitehead 1967: 244). Not in this case; it is too interesting an idea. One assumes that there must be *something* there, if the idea started in the first place and continues to be bandied about as if it were obvious truth. In fact, interpreters see an end of history in Hegel for two different reasons: because they think it *has* to be there, or because they *need* to see one. Engels and Nietzsche saw the end of history in Hegel's philosophy because they believed his philosophical dialectic required the end of history. They took Hegel seriously as a systematic thinker, and believed that an airtight system had to have an airtight, final end. Engels respected Hegel for this, but thought he got it wrong. Nietzsche despised Hegel for this (among other things), and also thought he got it wrong. Engels and Nietzsche represent the earliest important sources for the end of history idea in Hegel. Both read Hegelian philosophy as strongly implying or necessitating an end to history as well as philosophy in Hegel's philosophy. Theirs is a more philosophical rendering of the end of history mythology, and one that appears far less frequently since the late twentieth-century revival of Hegelian scholarship.

The other reason for the myth of the end – that interpreters somehow need Hegel to present them with an end of history – is less philosophical and more political, and unfortunately has not become less frequent in its appearance. As a matter of fact it has become an important part of early twenty-first-century political mythologies sometimes having nothing to do with Hegel at all: American imperial neoconservatism sees an end of history (and has marshaled

Hegelian arguments to its defense) in the triumph of global capitalism and the military spread of oligodemocracy; Wahhabist "petro-Islam" underwritten by the House of Saud sees an end of history (with no reference to Hegel) in a shift from Western to Arab centers of power and the dawning of a new day for the *Ummah* under wealthy Arab control; and philosophers such as Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou talk about the terminal crisis of global capitalism and the "revival of radical emancipatory politics around the world" (Žižek 2012b: 127) without actually speaking of the end of history per se (though see Žižek 2006: 297 and Badiou 2012). The two prominent writers who most strongly embraced the end of history in the twentieth century, the philosopher Alexandre Kojève and the political economist Francis Fukuyama, both did so because their own political beliefs deeply needed it, as much as any reading of Hegel or Marx: for Kojève in the 1930s the end of history in Hegel showed the emancipatory power of Marxism even as Europe faced its fears of Nazism; and for Fukuyama in the 1990s, the end of history accounted for the unforeseen collapse of the Soviet empire and explained the outbreak of democratic capitalism as the final evolution of human history.

But the question of the end of history is only partly explained away. Why are historians of ideas and political scientists so attracted to Hegel's philosophy? In an age when intellectual depth is sometimes seen as a political liability, and the press more likely to turn to a celebrity than a philosopher for policy guidance, why Hegel? Why now? Jürgen Habermas explains the continual appeal of Hegel's work for each generation of thinkers:

> As a whole, Hegel's system can be comprehended as an elaborated proof which falsifies the fundamental ontological assumptions of Classical as well as modern philosophy, namely, the abstract opposition between essence and appearance, between eternal Being and Non-being, and between the permanent and the ephemeral. A philosophy which knows itself to be the result of the same formative process that it comprehends in terms of the interrelationship of nature and history cannot set itself outside the element of time. Spirit devours time, but time for its part can render judgment on an impotent spirit. (Habermas 1973: 170)

That is, Hegel is the quintessential philosopher of time and history. This is somewhat of an ambivalent honor, to be sure, but it is difficult to deny. What makes the statement problematic is the opinion of contemporary philosophy that a philosophy of history, conceived as a philosophical explanation of the course which history has taken, is no longer a worthwhile undertaking. Such metanarratives are long out of fashion, having been replaced by sociological, political, economic, and psychological histories, which focus not upon the grand sweep of history, but on particular moments of cultural time and the way human individuals and societies have functioned at those moments. The great benefit of replacing overarching philosophical narratives with specific accounts of human

activities and events is that the former always tends to overlook the latter; the *facts* often get in the way of the *story* one wants to tell. There have been philosophical accounts of human history given since Hegel's time, of course, from Marx's economic theories and Nietzsche's account of the history of power, to Spengler's hugely popular *Decline of the West* (1918) or Foucault's archeologies and genealogies. None of them has quite had the grand vision of Hegel, however, and in fact most (if not all) have been reliant upon Hegel's work, either accepting him, modifying him, or reacting against him. But the decline of philosophy of history has not lessened interest in or reactions to Hegel's philosophy of history; quite the contrary, Hegel's Berlin lectures on the philosophy of history are frequently used as an introduction to his entire philosophy, and have been ever since the lectures were collected and published, first by Hegel's pupil Eduard Gans in 1837, and then by Hegel's son Karl Friedrich Wilhelm in 1840.

The lectures on the philosophy of history are among Hegel's clearest and most accessible texts; deceptively so, in fact. The educated non-professional may read them for benefit and understanding, for they are remarkably free of the philosophical jargon so many associate with Hegelian philosophy. This is part of the question of Hegel's end of history, however, because what are in Hegel's other works technical terms are in the lectures on the philosophy of religion used freely and often without reference to the rest of his philosophy. Because of this, readers who are not steeped in Hegel's philosophy are apt to misunderstand them. Yet their deceptive clarity is not the main reason why the lectures on the philosophy of history have always excited such interest. The driving force behind their popularity as a key to Hegel's thought is the *historical* emphasis of the lectures, and the relationship this historical emphasis has to the rest of Hegel's body of work. I do not mean Hegel's accuracy at portraying history; Hegel worked hard at getting history "right" and was more or less successful, given the limits of knowledge current in his day, but the lectures are obviously an artifact of an earlier time. When I say that Hegel is the quintessential philosopher of history, and that the historical is the key to his thought, I mean that Hegel is the quintessential *historical* philosopher. No philosophical thinker makes history itself – the temporal existence of women and men, kings and armies, nations and cultures – more central to the development of his thought than Hegel does. Of course, Hegel stands in a long line of philosophers who make history a central theme, all of whom stand in the lineage begun by Augustine in his *City of God*. But none of them gives actual history its own voice as Hegel does. Unlike Fichte, for example, Hegel does not ignore the actual *events* of history in favor of an overall plan of progress, but rather understands the events *themselves* as the catalysts which drive history forward to whatever ends are in view.

Hegel's belief in the inner directionality and purpose of history is part of the question of the end of history. Can this make sense? Does it make sense to speak teleologically about history, or does this raise the very question of history itself: what is history, the sequence of events, or the meaning given to those events, either as they occur, or afterwards; and if afterwards, how much time must pass? This question (and it is one question, not several) lies deep within the Hegelian understanding of the historicity of being, and its development as spirit. It will not do simply to point out the German distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte*, that is, history as event and history as record, and say that Hegel is concerned with *Geschichte* but not *Historie*.[1] As a matter of fact, a major concern of this book is to show just how important the record of history is to Hegel, and to partly exonerate him from the accusation of treating history as an a priori playground for transcendental spirit. In Hegelian philosophy we arrive at *Geschichte* only though and in terms of *Historie*, never apart from it. As I intend to show, this is one of the reasons the end of history idea in Hegelian scholarship fails to come to terms with the full complexity of what he understands as absolute spirit. Hegel's concern for actual, mundane, dates-and-names history is itself a manifestation of the inner teleology at work in his philosophy. Spirit will emerge in my reading of Hegel not as the game-master who moves the pieces on the board, but the motion of the pieces themselves as they fulfill the role that they have as pieces on the board. The inner teleology of Hegel's history is Gadamer's idea of play: "all playing is a being-played. The attraction of the game … consists precisely in the fact that the game masters the players … What holds the player in its spell, draws him into play, and keeps him there is the game itself" (Gadamer 1994: 106). History is a game played by no one, and by everyone. Mechanistic, wholly external accounts of Hegelian absolute spirit within history fail to grasp the highly nuanced play of Hegelian spirit, and read him as an exemplification of linear, top-down historicism of the Popperian sort: "an approach to the social sciences which assumes that *historical predication* is their principle aim, and which assumes that this aim is attainable by discovering the 'rhythms' or the 'patterns,' the 'laws' or the 'trends' that underlie the evolution of history" (Popper 2002 [1957]: 3).

Hegel's teleology, however understood, stands as a strong indictment against him, and against philosophy of history in general, in current anti-metaphysical philosophies as well as schools of thought that have accepted Popper's boiled-down version of everything historicist (that Hegel's philosophy of history is a

[1] I take this simplified reading of *Geschichte* and *Historie* from Barth studies; in part, because Karl Barth made important theological use of the two terms. For Barth, the central Christian category of revelation is not *Historie*, because revelation is heteronomous mystery, whereas only *Geschichte* can bear the heavier weight of meaning. "'*Historie*' is something that can be proved by general historical science, whereas '*Geschichte*' is something that really takes place in time and space, but may or may not be proved" (Barth 1963: 45).

bogeyman both for postmodern philosophers as well as intellectual descendants of Karl Popper shows that Hegelian criticism makes for strange bedfellows indeed). To be fair, the skeleton Hegel which comes in for the harshest criticism deserves it, and more, for this Hegel is a proponent of inevitable historical, cultural, spiritual, and political progress in all its forms. Hegel "is *persona non grata* in contemporary philosophy … the idea that there will be progress in thought, and alongside this a belief in some mistaken *Sonderweg*, is itself a Hegelian form of thinking and is only possible on the basis of his philosophy of history" (Liessmann, in von Schmitter and Matthias 2007: 168). It is not wrong to study this Hegel – this is a real Hegel, one among many, and not the least influential: hence the well-placed "also" (*aussi*) in Derrida's (1997 [1976]: 26) observation that "*Hegel est* aussi *le penseur de la différence irréductible*." Hegel is also the thinker of the totality of the absolute; yes, *oui*, as well as the thinker of the mediation of *différence*, the differing-deferral of meaning as it comes within and as the event. Witness the outpouring of scholarly works from across the political and philosophical spectrum dedicated to rethinking Hegel's philosophy in the last decades of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first. Caputo (2011: 56–58) is representative of this project:

> The perverse core of Hegel lay in being a liminal figure, the lining surface that on one side is the absolute consummation of metaphysics, where metaphysics tries to contain the uncontainable force of the event, while on the other side simultaneously showing the way out of such perversity … The perverse core of Hegel is to conceive a world in which the absolute is neither substance nor subject, or in which "substance" and "subject" would only be provisional nominal effects, stand-ins for more nameless and boundless virtualities, for virtualities still unnamed. By the same token, history would be a radically immanent movement without the steadying hand of teleology at its wheel.

My project in this book is closely aligned with Caputo's rereading of Hegel, especially the aspects of Hegel that can be seen as liminal, as thresholds across which we step as we enter into the flow of the evental site. Hegel's philosophy of history is one of these thresholds, because it prepares a readiness for the future without actually saying what that future will be. The indictment against Hegelian philosophy of history is that it ends history, closes the door and bars the way forward across the threshold. But this is a factually erroneous reading of the philosophy of history and the end of history, as I will show in this study; and it is untrue to Hegel's own meaning as well. That is, the end of history idea fails both in terms of *Historie* as well as *Geschichte*. But I differ from Caputo and others in that I do not think that Hegelian teleology is entirely beyond redemption. This requires a close argument and I will not make it here; in fact, the entire book will be required to unpack exactly what I understand as a properly Hegelian *τέλος* and how it plays itself out within Hegelian philosophy. Of course, I completely reject what Caputo, Žižek, and others also reject within Hegelian teleology, or

rather, I recognize it as a possible but flawed reading of what Hegel understands the *τέλος* of spirit to be. Briefly, what I mean by the *τέλος* in Hegel is what Caputo calls the *event*, following Heidegger's *Ereignis* but allowing it to play outside its Heideggerian boundaries: an event is "a summons, call, demand, claim or appeal, as well as a promise and a lure – whose structure is on display in what Derrida calls a 'sovereignty without force'" (Caputo 2006: 28–29). Strange to use this Derridean phrase to describe what Hegel insisted operated in terms of a cunning of reason, commonly seen as Hegel's force without form, the absolute. And on one level, this is exactly what Hegel means by absolute spirit. But it is not all that he means, and here the lure within the cunning of reason is an appeal to a future not yet realized but always already possible within the movement of spirit. Both Caputo and Žižek draw too stark a line between *either* a Hegelian *τέλος* which is a motivating, cunning force in history (a totalizing Hegel) *or* a complete absence of any sort of teleology in Hegel (an infinite Hegel). What they miss is the very Hegelian notion of the mediating teleology active as a call within the events of history – that is, the Hegelian *τέλος* plays within the interstices of spirit, because the *τέλος* is what spirit is, it is how it *becomes* what it is, not what it is *given* to become.

Hegel's philosophy of absolute spirit partakes of a double movement of contraction and expansion, wherein the absolute shelters within itself its own becoming, but also depends upon others to be what it is, because what it is, is the spirit of others. Heidegger captures the contingency of the Hegelian absolute which is so often overlooked in the rush to see Hegel only as a totalizing figure: "'To be with us' belongs to the absoluteness of the absolute. Without this 'with us' the absolute would be the solitary one [*das Einsame*] which would not be able to appear to itself within phenomena. It could not rise into its unconcealedness. Without this rise (*φύσις*) it would not be alive (*ζώη*)" (Heidegger *GA* 5:204). What makes the absolute the absolute is the contingency of the other. This is not Hegelian/Heideggerian wordplay, and one does not need to speak Hegelese fluently to understand it. The absolute is life, *ζώη*, and as such cannot be excluded from any discussion of historical becoming: excluded either as an unneeded middle term which obfuscates the radical openness of the evental site (the immanent exclusion of the absolute), or excluded because it is the only thing that matters (the transcendent exclusion of the absolute). To make too much of the absolute is to make nothing of it; if it is everything, it is nothing, serves no real purpose except as a stand-in for some transcendental signified or noumenal presence. But this is not Hegel's final verdict on *das Absolute*. The absolute is the process, not the goal; the realization of the finality of the process within the trajectory of the process, proleptically appropriated by the sociality of reason and made concrete within human lives, human means, human ends, and ultimately (absolutely) in human history.

The question of the end of history demands that attention be paid to events; whatever we mean when we speak of history, if it is uncoupled from events, the event, the call of time, it becomes meaningless idealism. Despite the general animus shown towards teleological accounts of history, an important factor in understanding Hegel's resilience in the face of anti-modern or postmodern critique, ironically, is his Aristotelian faith that the τέλος, "*der innerste bewußtlose Treib*" (Hegel *VPW* 87), is being realized by way of discrete and autonomous events. Hegel constantly leads us back to events, and forbids us to ignore their particularity. By taking history seriously, Hegel takes the actual events of history seriously. Nevertheless, Hegel's account of history is not exclusively about the events, however important they are. According to Hegel, there is an inner dynamic at work, an effective reason which informs the realization of individual ends, and makes of them a universal end. Accordingly, the greatest threat to the coherence of this universal end is contingency or *Zufälligkeit*. Hegel means by this heteronomous necessity, "that is, necessity which originates in causes which are themselves only external circumstances" (Hegel *VPW* 29). If history has a purpose, if the disparate ends are finally to be understood from the point of view of one single end (though never an end in time), that purpose must be driven forward by its own necessity, and must work itself out within and among the events of history itself. That is, the purpose cannot be a given purpose, it must be an achieved purpose. In historical terms, the greatest contingency is the existence of the negative, that which cannot be understood in terms of or subsumed within the universal plan: in moral terms, the negative is the existence of evil. Hegel therefore is driven to conceive of his philosophy of history as a theodicy, a "justification of the ways of God," as Hegel puts it, because the universal course of the absolute is understood in representational form as the traditional *will of God*. "In order that the evil in the world be comprehended, thinking spirit should be reconciled with its ills" (Hegel *Werke* 12:28). Because history is not simply the abstract course of discrete events, but the actual development of the events themselves, the nature of those events plays a constitutive role in the philosophical account Hegel offers of the world.

The end of history, then, lives on in contemporary political discourse as well as philosophical questioning because it is a hermeneutical tool for understanding the world. As such, it remains always within the hermeneutical circle of preunderstandings and prejudices that make up the material from which future interpretations are possible. The problem with the hermeneutical use of the end of history is that it rests upon a false foundation: it may well be useful, but it is not true. This is not always a terrible thing, but what is lost in continuing to invoke the end of history to explain this or that political, historical, or intellectual triumph, is greater than what is won. The aspect of the truth of Hegel's philosophy that is lost in the rush to ascribe world-historical significance to a given event (and even Hegel sometimes lost this in his own thought) is the

fecundity of the unrealized future. The importance of the future is easy to miss in Hegel's thought. He says nothing about it, specifically, except for a few hints here and there. Hegel's philosophy is self-consciously attuned to the power of the past in the present moment of spirit's coming to be what it is. So important is the past for Hegel, in fact, that Heidegger in his lecture course on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is driven to explain Hegel's silence concerning the future:

> Hegel sometimes speaks about having been, but never about the future. This accords with the fact that for him the outstanding character of time is the past; it is the passing-away and the ephemeral, the ever-departed [*sie ist das Vergehen und das Vergängliche, immer Vergangene*]. Consequently one finds here an orientation towards time and the past; and it discloses itself – in a different and in fact completely different form – as a "crossroads". (Heidegger *GA* 32:116)

This "crossroads" of time and Hegel's eternal orientation to the past is the question and the problem of the end of history, and its failing and falling away. From where do we come, and to where will we go? From the past, that which is always in the present "the passing-away and the ephemeral" and yet which contains within it the inheritance of futures past. And into the future, which as time is always in motion and can never be halted, held down, or fully thematized. The end of history sees in Hegel's notion of time only a turning towards the past, and fails so see that the event-character of time in Hegel's philosophy is at every moment a crossroads, a possible turning of spirit which relies almost entirely upon the inheritance of the past, but which also depends upon the willing subject to project itself forwards into new possibilities.

If the question of the end of history is only partially answered by the failure of the question itself, the problem of the end of history still remains. Despite the fact that the end of history seems to explain the trajectories people believe that they see within history, what happens when history goes on, when new and unforeseen events rise up to overwhelm the proud hubris of history's termination? At the crossroads, the end of history loses its way, for it ceases to be an end as well as a history: only the future presents itself, and the future is always closed to Hegelian speculation. As Lutz Niethammer has demonstrated in his brief but definitive study of the various announcements of the end of history, any time a thinker too closely identifies themselves with a particular political movement, the collapse of that movement (Heidegger) or the triumph of that movement (Kojève, Francis Fukuyama) seems to mark an epochal shift in human history; perhaps even an end. These thinkers "threw in their lot with radical currents in the name of the meaningfulness of 'history,' lending their pens, their names and their counsel" (Niethammer 1992: 142). Thus one can read Heidegger's claim that "only a God can save us" (Heidegger 2003: 38) as his post-historical stance towards the failure of Being to disclose itself when

National Socialism failed to become the new age of being that Heidegger hoped for – or perhaps, the radical failure of the people to grasp in "the inner truth and greatness of this movement" (*der inneren Wahrheit und Größe dieser Bewegung*) (Heidegger *GA* 40:208) the disclosure of being. Hitlerism collapsed instead into what it was all along, a scheme for total war and total power void of any deeper philosophical meaning. After the end of history, all we can do is prepare for the readiness of the last God. But "the last God is not the end, but the other beginning of boundless possibilities for our history. For its sake history up to this point should not terminate [*nicht verenden*] but be brought to its end [*Ende*]. We must bring about the transfiguration of its essential basic positions in transition and readiness" (Heidegger *GA* 65:411).

The movement that Heidegger attached himself to was a violent failure, but Kojève's work on the European Common Market after World War II seemed to provide some measure of validation for his thesis that Hegel had announced the end of history and that through a Marxian and Heideggerian interpretation of Hegel politics could now free itself from the violent struggle for freedom and set about the work of politically realizing it in the here and now. If Heidegger's post-war period was his turn to an end beyond a history that had failed, after the end the new beginning called for an expectant preparation for the coming of the last God. Collapse was the end; the last God, Heidegger's post-end language for preparation in expectation of the hint of a new opening of being, no more. For Kojève, it was perceived success and not collapse that opened the way to the end of history. The defeat of German fascism and the move towards European integration seemed a confirmation of Kojève's reading of history in the lectures he had given during the 1930s, later published as *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*. Similarly, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the economic boom of the 1990s in the United States seemed to Francis Fukuyama a confirmation of his reading of history, enshrined in his famous *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), a book that is still discussed in some political circles. For all three – Heidegger, Kojève, Fukuyama – the central event of history in their own times (the failure of National Socialism; the birth of a unified Europe; the economic rather than military end of the Cold War) marked the end of history, and their later thought was galvanized by this interpretation and revolved around it.

None of these readings of history has stood the test of time, but the Hegelian underpinning (acknowledged or latent) of all of them has sunk into the historical and political consciousness of the age; a demonstration of Whitehead's dictum (1967: 244) "It is more important that a proposition be interesting than that it be true." If the question of the end of history is its impossibility, the problem of the end of history is its persistence. In fact, the language (if not the fact) of the end of history is taken for granted by both advocates and detractors of the idea. In an essay entitled "History Resumes: Sectarianism's Unlearned

Lessons" (one "resumes" after an "end"), journalist David Rieff argues that the return of "sectarianism" around the globe sharply undermines the leading liberal democratic assumption that the world is slowly coming together around shared values and democratic practices. Rieff's points are well taken, but the philosophical culprit behind this democratic delusion is, of course, Hegel. Rieff's comments are worth quoting in full, because they are representative of exactly the sort of use and abuse of Hegelian philosophy that is so commonplace, and they serve as an excellent statement of the end of history problem:

> The great physicist Max Planck once criticized his colleague James Jeans for refusing to relinquish his theory even in the face of facts that should have caused him to do so. Jeans, Planck wrote to a mutual colleague, "is the very model of a theorist as he should not be, just as Hegel was in philosophy: so much the worse for the facts if they don't fit." By analogy, one can say that the people who called for an invasion of Iraq in 2002 and early 2003 … were the very model of interventionists as they should not be … [I]t is arguably the current Hegelian consensus that history is an evolutionary progress in a positive direction toward an ideal end state in which some form of liberal, law-based, rights-observing capitalism is, as Francis Fukuyama has put it, history's culmination, "the only viable alternative for technologically advanced societies" … But unable to free themselves from the bear trap of one version or another of contemporary Western progress narratives, Fukuyama, his erstwhile neoconservative comrades, and many prominent activists within the largely left-leaning human rights movement … imagine that … once prosperity has been achieved sectarianism will also disappear. (Rieff 2012)

Rieff's essay is both a straightforward statement of the end of history thesis and an indication of what is wrong with it, historically speaking. Rieff's warning about the abject blindness of contemporary faith in political progress is well taken. But his use of Hegel here is both typical and flawed. It is the same version of the old argument, taken for granted as the received wisdom of political science even though philosophers for the most part reject the end of history idea in Hegel. Rieff's statement about Hegel is incorrect: it is not "arguably the current Hegelian consensus" that anything like an end of history is at work in his thought. To be sure, the idea will still be found in some introductory texts and in the popular press, but the fact is that most Hegel scholars recognize that Hegel did not believe in an end to history. In contemporary politics it is only the philosophical legacy of Kojève and the popular legacy of Fukuyama (which not even Fukuyama believes any more) which continue regularly to invoke the end of history idea. In Rieff's defense, he is not a Hegel scholar, and when he says that an end of history is the consensus he is referencing some very loud quasi-Hegelian conversations that took place in the last decade of the twentieth century and have continued, albeit in a more muted vein, ever since. None has been more influential in recent times than the argument, to which I have alluded here several times, made by Francis Fukuyama about the end of history. For all the importance of his argument, particularly in terms of raising

the problem of the end of history anew in the post-Cold War era in the United States, Fukuyama is a minor character in the large drama of the end of history which I outline in Part I of this book. The major players – Engels, Kojève, Nietzsche, Hegel – are all detailed in individual chapters below. But some attention should be paid to the version of the end of history which Fukuyama once presented as the culmination of Western history, for the end of history as a problem is clear here as nowhere else.

First appearing in a speech Fukuyama gave at the University of Chicago and then in 1989 as an essay in the *National Interest*, Fukuyama parlayed the success of the essay into a book which was the talk of political circles in 1992, *The End of History and the Last Man*. The "end of history" in the title is taken from Kojève's reading of Hegel through Marx and given by Fukuyama a capitalist spin: liberal capitalism was the destiny of history, and with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism as a serious contender on the world stage, that destiny has been fulfilled. Supposedly, the development of liberal democratic capitalism and the evolution of freedom in history have followed parallel paths, and their coming together results in the triumph of both. History, as the history of the emergence of universal freedom, is at an end. The "last man" of the title is a gloss on Nietzsche's *der letzte Mensch* from *Also sprach Zarathustra.* For Nietzsche, the last man is the polar opposite of the self-assertive *Übermensch*, languishing in his meaningless comfort having lost the will to power; for Fukuyama, the last man is a relativist who "*knows* better than to risk his life for a cause, because he recognizes that history was full of pointless battles," one of those who are "content to sit at home, congratulating themselves on their broadmindedness and lack of fanaticism" (Fukuyama 1992: 307). Heidegger has his last God after the death of God (announced by Nietzsche's Zarathustra); Fukuyama, his last man (announced by Nietzsche's Zarathustra), but there is a crucial difference. Heidegger prepares for the possibility of the last God after the death of God. Fukuyama lauds the end of history, but the last man makes him uneasy – and rightly so. The last man is a problem, a decadent remainder which benefits from the life and death struggles of history but is ill-equipped and unworthy to enjoy the benefits of that struggle. The post-historical capitalist last man is a problem for the end of history because he is a question that answers itself: "The life of the last man is one of physical security and material plenty … Is this really what the human story has been 'all about' these past few millennia?" (1992: 312). Question asked, question answered. The problem, however, remains.

Brummett identifies Fukuyama's work on the end of history as a prime example of a "postmillennial apocalyptic rhetoric" which ushers in the gradual but inexorable arrival of a new age. For Fukuyama, "history is going somewhere; it is not only getting better, but there is a *final* perfection to be achieved,

and it *will* be achieved" (Brummett 1991: 150). On the other hand, Zhang (2010: 631–51) identifies Fukuyama's problem in a confusion between the ontological and the historical. He notes that Hegel's notion of end is an ontological premise which is fulfilled in absolute knowledge, whereas Fukuyama makes the question of the end of history a purely immanent and historical outcome. Hughes (2011: 97) has a strangely appreciative perspective on Fukuyama's claims, rereading them through what he calls a "postmodern concept of time" that sees the idea of all-pervasive *Geist* as the "twin desires of economic development and self-esteem." Žižek (2006: 297) argues that, to the extent that global capitalism may well be on its last legs given its technocratic war against humanity and the environment, "Fukuyama was right, global capitalism is 'the end of history.' A certain excess which was, as it were, kept under check in previous history … is in capitalism elevated into the very principle of social life." Žižek takes this "positivist" argument to its logical conclusion in *Living in the End Times* (2011: 33): "What is unimaginable within the positivist vision of history is an 'objective' process which determines in advance the possible coordinates of political interventions is precisely a radical political intervention which changes these very 'objective' coordinates and thus, in a way, creates the conditions for its own success." Hegel tended towards this sort of positive historical understanding, but because he refuses to speculate about the future he cannot travel with Fukuyama down the road of historical finitude.

The loss of struggle for the last man is the loss of meaning, for Fukuyama; ethically, a strongly Kantian notion which is at odds with the communitarianism of a Hegel or an Aristotle, which builds on belonging and virtue rather than autonomy and *ἀγών* – or rather, *ἀγών* is the striving which drives the dialectic to arrive at a higher synthesis of truth for Hegel, it is a means to an end (though a necessary one), whereas Kant seems to value struggle for struggle's sake. Aristotle, however, holds that moral strength is of greater virtue than moral tenacity: "victory is different than simply avoiding defeat" (*Nic. Eth.* 1150a35–36). Because struggle is necessary, the problem of the end of history is the problem of a loss of meaning – or rather, the problem problematizes the definition of struggle as meaningful. Even Fukuyama's last men might in the last analysis decide to point their wagons in a different direction and seek new horizons (1992: 338–39). But these are not the last men after all. They are those who are still on the way to the end of history, who have not yet reached its glorious and dubious promised land. Glorious, because it has been our destiny all along (really?); dubious, because it makes of us ungrateful weaklings (really?). Struggle is hard to come by at the end of history, and so Fukuyama has had to look elsewhere for battles worth fighting. Though the American neoconservative policymakers who flock to his end of history banner in droves are content to see in the rise of politically muscular Islam a new enemy, Fukuyama

has said that global anti-modern religious movements cannot truly rival liberal democracy in the long run, and has instead turned his attention to the unfettered growth and potential threat of biomedical technology to freedom and democracy. The first chapter of *Our Posthuman Future* bears a powerful epigraph from Heidegger's essay on technology:

> The threat to man does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The actual threat has always afflicted man in his essence. The rule of enframing (*Gestell*) threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth. (Fukuyama 2002: 3; cf. Heidegger *GA* 7:29)

While it likely deserves greater attention, this book has not excited the world in the way *The End of History* did. A capitalist end of history was a message many people wanted to hear in the 1990s; warnings about the use of technology in the medical industrial complex fall on deafer and deafer ears at the start of the third millennium.

It has to be said that some small part of the excitement over Fukuyama's 1992 blockbuster was that it licensed people to use the words "Hegel," "Marx," and "Nietzsche" in dinner-party conversations tied to ongoing economic and political issues at the end of what Bobbitt (2002) calls the Long War of 1914–90. And even though in the decades since its publication it has been panned and dissected by philosophers and economists, historians and politicians – even Fukuyama has distanced himself from aspects of the book – there should be no doubt that *The End of History and the Last Man* was a significant event in its own way. It put perennial questions of philosophy and history back on the table for policymakers as well as the non-philosophical public, and (though some are loath to admit it) the success of the book played an important role in refurbishing a plush, padded-velvet cushioned seat at that table for Hegel – albeit a very un-Hegelian Hegel. Derrida (1994: 56) reminds us that this recent version of the end of history has been around since the 1950s, and Fukuyama's work is just one in a long line of works proclaiming the hegemony of liberal democratic capitalism and "the death of Marxism" as "a gospel" like the pronouncements of the end of fascism and nationalism that followed the end of World War II. That is, the contemporary myth of the end of history bookends the Cold War and is in a sense an artifact of that period. Yet without a doubt, the earlier iterations of the end of history were confined to academia, and were hardly fodder for sidewalk conversation and impromptu debate. *The End of History and the Last Man* was an American phenomenon, and outside the anglophone world its impact was much smaller. But it was also a Hegelian phenomenon of the first order, which both raised Hegel's political profile and painted him anew with old accusations and mistaken interpretations. Engels,

Nietzsche, and Kojève are the three most important influences on the idea of an end of history in Hegel, the grandfathers and father of the idea, respectively; but without a doubt in the last decade of the twentieth century, Fukuyama's version of the end of history, stripped of its Marxian underpinnings for an ostensibly post-Marxist, post-Cold War audience, was the one getting all the attention. The problem of the end of history returns with a vengeance, its question unanswered.

But it did not start with Fukuyama.

2 Hegel and Nietzsche

> Nihilism in Nietzsche's sense means: that all *goals* are gone.
> Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, 2012

2.1 Nietzsche's Hegelian sources

Friedrich Engels and Friedrich Nietzsche are the double sources for the "end of history" in Hegel, and the question and problem of the idea must start with them. Hegel's own students used the phrase, and some of Hegel's contemporaries and immediate followers argued about it, but the idea of the end of history as an organized theme in Hegelian philosophy owes its staying power and long life to the interpretations of Hegel's philosophy offered by Engels and Nietzsche. For his part, Nietzsche stands as the culmination of the philosophical period which encompasses Engels, Marx, Kierkegaard, and other nineteenth-century Hegelians and anti-Hegelians, both chronologically and intellectually. Nietzsche's role as the seal of the prophets of the modern period was established by Heidegger, and his shadow looms largest over the entire question of nineteenth-century philosophy, rightly or wrongly. Yet Friedrich Engels was twenty-four years Nietzsche's senior, and Nietzsche outlived him by five years. Also, Engels's work is somewhat closer to Hegel's own time period, and certainly has more direct affinity with the political issues and philosophical problems which arose in German thought in the immediate aftermath of Hegelian philosophy; indeed, Nietzsche spent the most productive period of his life away from Germany and in fact called himself "homeless" (Nietzsche *SW* 3:628 §377). Why, then, is it appropriate to begin a discussion of the sources of the end of history controversy in Hegel with Nietzsche, rather than with Engels, and his great collaborator Marx?

Several good reasons present themselves. For one, as Karl Löwith (1964: xv) memorably put it, "Hegel and Nietzsche are the two end points between which the historical course of the German spirit in the nineteenth century moves." From Heidegger to Hyppolite, philosophers who wish to trace the tale of Western philosophy from Hegel to the present day inevitably must work

through the Nietzschean reaction to Hegelian philosophy, including the ways in which Nietzsche's critique of Hegel influenced Nietzsche's own work, directly or indirectly. Hyppolite, for example, points out that the proclamation of the "death of God" in *Zarathustra* is foreshadowed by Hegel's prior claim that "God himself is dead" (Hegel *VPR* 3:249–50) in the self-diremption of spirit, though Hyppolite refuses to draw a causal link between the two claims. "Hegel rejects the complete reduction of God to man. He always maintained that to some extent man necessarily had to surpass himself. Man's greatest torment … is to be reduced to himself alone, to have absorbed the divine into himself. If God himself is dead, what remains?" (Hyppolite 1974: 543–44). This despite the curious fact that even though "it is of course difficult to prove that Nietzsche did not study Hegel in depth, nothing in his work suggests that he accorded more than a cursory attention to Hegel's texts" (Houlgate 1986: 25). That is, there is every reason to believe that one of the most important critics of Hegelian philosophy did not read Hegel's actual work, or knew it only in passing or through the work of others. This is not to suggest that Nietzsche was unqualified to comment on Hegel's work or the Hegelian influence on the work of Nietzsche's own time. The Nietzschean *Kulturkampf* would be unthinkable without the Hegelian "spirit of optimism" (Nietzsche *SW* 1:117 §18) which so incensed him; and it is difficult to see how post-Hegelian thinkers even as great as Marx and Kierkegaard could have inaugurated a critique of Hegelianism as thorough and as definitive as that brought about by Nietzsche. Whatever his personal relationship with Hegel's writings, Nietzsche's animosity towards all things Hegelian is unrivaled. In fact, what Williamson (2004: 266) felicitously calls Nietzsche's "negative cultural theology" was aimed at the very idols which Hegel's hagiographical followers had erected, namely German cultural triumphalism and the positivism which allowed Hegelian *Wissenschaft* to masquerade as the final arbiter of philosophical truth.

The best reason to begin a study on the end of history in Hegel with Nietzsche is simply chronological: though Engels is the older of the two thinkers, and actually has a deeper knowledge of Hegel's writings and philosophy, Nietzsche writes about Hegel's end of history before Engels does. It is taken as a commonplace truth that the philosophical object of Nietzsche's withering intellectual and cultural critiques is Hegel, yet Nietzsche actually says surprisingly little about him or his works directly. This is not to undermine the fact that Hegel is one of Nietzsche's consistent bugbears; "[Nietzsche] makes it clear that Hegel is an important target when he practices the sort of 'criticism' that rests uneasy with assumed truths" (Miklowitz 1998: 109), though it is important to bear in mind that Nietzsche's primary sources for Hegel's *ideas* were not Hegel's *writings*. It is possible, however, to be even more exact in tracing Nietzsche's actual exposure to Hegel's writings. Specifically, Nietzsche seems to have relied mainly on his Basel colleague Jakob Burckhardt's *Weltgeschichtliche*

Betrachtungen (published in 1905 but based on lectures which Nietzsche attended in 1868–71) and its stark critique of Hegelian philosophy, as well as the deeply anti-Hegelian work of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), who lectured in Berlin at the same time as Hegel and whose course attendance famously suffered because of it.[1] Nietzsche also takes as a prime target for the anti-Hegelian portions of his *Untimely Meditations* (1874) the writings of the Hegelian Eduard von Hartmann, whose *Philosophie des Unbewußten* (1869) was an uneasy blend of Hegel and Schopenhauer which Nietzsche detested. It is possible that Nietzsche's opposition to Hartmann (and presumably the Hegelian elements in Hartmann's work) was partially an attempt to distinguish himself from the better-known Hartmann, since both wrote about history. "All this suggests not so much that Nietzsche took Hartmann seriously, but that he was keenly aware that his readers might have done so" (Dienstag 2006: 174). However, even if Nietzsche's condemnation of Hartmann's work stemmed as much from a desire to carve out his own intellectual identity as it did from a genuine dislike of his views, it is doubtless true that Hartmann's work represented for Nietzsche the sort of Hegelian "historical sickness" which he hoped to combat with his own assessment of history.

Thus with the trio of Burckhardt, Schopenhauer, and Hartmann, we have the most important sources for Nietzsche's view of Hegelian philosophy, and most importantly Hegel's philosophy of history.[2] Schopenhauer and Burckhardt provided Nietzsche with the critique of Hegelian history, though Nietzsche had his own reasons for targeting Hegel which differ from those of his influences, especially Schopenhauer, whom Nietzsche eventually comes to reject partially because of Schopenhauer's views on history. Nevertheless, for a time, Nietzsche would refer to Schopenhauer as his "master" (Nietzsche *SB* 3:84) and to Schopenhauer's writings as "an intellectual home, a place of refuge for troubled hours" (*SB* 2:229). Despite the fact that Nietzsche develops intellectually in directions his great spiritual influence Schopenhauer would find impossible to embrace, Schopenhauer's influence upon Nietzsche is decisive. "One has little hope of understanding Nietzsche's thought and development on issues concerning truth and knowledge unless one understands it as deeply tied into Schopenhauer's thought" (Clark 1998: 38) – and Schopenhauer despised Hegelian philosophy. For his part, Hartmann provided Nietzsche with

[1] Bykhovskiĭ (1984: 44) says that in Schopenhauer's first semester in Berlin "only four or five students (three of them medical students) attended Schopenhauer's lectures," and in the subsequent twenty-three semesters, while listed in the course catalog, he taught nothing further.

[2] Nietzsche was also deeply indebted to Ralph Waldo Emerson, calling him his *Bruder-Seele* or soul brother (Nietzsche *SB* 6:463) and famously using an Emersonian aphorism on the title-page of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*. The ironies abound here, since for his part Emerson was profoundly influenced by Hegel's notion of absolute spirit, which he first learned of through the Ohio Hegelian Stallo's 1848 work *General Principles of the Philosophy of Nature*. Through Emerson, via Stallo, Nietzsche too is a Hegelian.

a concrete contemporary example of just how badly a certain type of Hegelian thinking about history had "bewitched" German philosophy, and it is within the context of Nietzsche's attack on Hartmann that the end of history issue first arises in the form in which we know it today. I take each of these Nietzschean influences in turn, beginning with the earliest and most important, the work of Arthur Schopenhauer.

2.2 Schopenhauer, history, and Hegel

It is hardly an overstatement to say that Arthur Schopenhauer was contemptuous of the great bulk of popular post-Kantian philosophy, especially its three great representatives Fichte, Schelling, and most especially Hegel, in great part because of Hegel's association with the philosophy of history. Schopenhauer believed that the philosophers who followed Kant and tried in their own ways to either further the Kantian project or to answer its challenge were at best misguided, or at worst were liars and incompetents. A passage which appears in Schopenhauer's masterpiece *The World as Will and Representation* is representative of his view (Schopenhauer *SW* 2:23):

> Fichte is the father of fake philosophy [*Scheinphilosophie*], the unspeakable method which by the ambiguous use of words, incomprehensible talk, and sophisms, tries to deceive … This method reached its height, after it had been applied by Schelling, in Hegel, as is well known, in whose work it blossomed into true charlatanism. Whoever seriously mentions Fichte alongside Kant shows that he has no real idea of what Kant is.

Of course, Schopenhauer does not merely take the Kantian critique to be sufficient in itself; he criticizes and adapts Kant's philosophy, particularly the Kantian concept of the *noumena* (the *Ding an sich*, the thing-in-itself) and the *phenomena* (*Erscheinung* or appearance), while at the same time arguing that his reading of Kant is the one which explains the lapses and omissions in Kant's own work (in this, Schopenhauer is no different from Fichte, whose *Ich*-philosophy also claimed to be a fuller and more robust Kantianism, shorn of the perceived contradictions found in Kantian thought).

Schopenhauer held that the Kantian separation of *noumena* and *phenomena*, "that which appears [*dem Angeschauten*, *φαινόμενον*] and that which is thought [*dem Gedachten*, *νοούμενον*]" (*SW* 1:120), was Kant's great philosophical insight (*SW* 1:564). For Schopenhauer, the *noumena* represented an unchanging, Platonic singularity which was known to humans primarily as will, the *Wille zum Leben* or will to live, to life. Hence the meaning behind the title of Schopenhauer's masterwork: its subject matter is "the world as will and representation," i.e. the world as the endless and inexorable interplay of the great Kantian distinctions understood as *noumena* or will, and

phenomena or representation. Schopenhauer's focus is decidedly on the primacy of will as *noumena*, which, unlike Kant, he conceived of as in some sense knowable, as in its manifestation as will, for example, though not through the Kantian methodology such as the categories of perception (Kant *KrV* A80/B106), which categories Schopenhauer rejected, "just as Kant himself rejected those of Aristotle" (Schopenhauer *SW* 1:641). In responding to a passage in Kant's first *Critique* (*KrV* A253/B309) explaining the necessity of the categories of perception for knowledge of external objects, Schopenhauer comments, "In a sense this sentence contains everything that is wrong with Kant's thought in a nutshell, because it exposes to the light of day his false conception of the relationship between sensation, perception, and thought" (Schopenhauer *SW* 1:638). Schopenhauer's critique of Kant is in part a rejection of the latter's perceived failure to realize the truth of his own philosophy. Kant's domesticization of the *noumena* by means of conceiving the *phenomena* through the categories of perception was to Schopenhauer nothing less than a betrayal of the best insights of the Kantian critique. Kant's categories of perception – which Schopenhauer claims Kant borrows arbitrarily from Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* 40b17ff. – have "actually become a Procrustean bed on to which Kant forces every possible consideration" (Schopenhauer *SW* 1:632). To approach genuine knowledge of true and lasting reality, the *Ding an sich*, by means of its manifestations, is exactly backwards according to Schopenhauer.

Similarly, Schopenhauer denies that empirical manifestations or *phenomena* can be grounded by the *noumena* in any meaningful way. This claim is at the heart of Schopenhauer's identification of the will as the *noumena*, since "of all possible concepts, the concept of the will is the only one that does not have its origins in the phenomenon, not in the mere representation of perception; rather it comes from within, proceeding from everyone's most immediate consciousness" (*SW* 1:172). What is important to Schopenhauer in the doctrine of *noumena* or the thing-in-itself is the notion of permanence and the assertion that only the *noumenon* is "really real," as it were. Tellingly, Schopenhauer closely associates the best insights of Kantian philosophy, the *noumena* and *phenomena*, with Plato's myth of the cave in *Republic* 514a and the Vedantic declaration *tat tvam asi*, "you are that," in the *Chāndogya Upanishad* 6:8–16: the one, unchanging reality in the universe, of which all the manifestations of things and ideas in the world – indeed the world itself – are merely *māyā* or illusion (Schopenhauer *SW* 1:566–68). Schopenhauer freely borrowed terms and concepts from Asian philosophy, particularly Vedanta and Buddhism, though his actual reliance upon and familiarity with Vedantic or Buddhist thought remains controversial. Magee (1997: 340), for example, notes that "There is nothing controversial in saying that of the major figures in Western philosophy Schopenhauer is the one who has the most in common with Eastern

thought. Less adequately pondered is the fact that much of what it is that the two have in common was taken by Schopenhauer from Kant." Magee's argument is that Western and Eastern thought developed "strikingly similar" pictures of the world independently of each other. Singh (2007: 55–72) offers a more measured assessment of Schopenhauer's use of Buddhism and Vedanta, but he also is quick to point out that, as any great systematizer, Schopenhauer is more likely to have adjusted what he took from Eastern philosophy to suit his own ends than to have reoriented his own thinking to South Asian ways of viewing the world. Plurality, change, inconstancy, passing away; these belong to time and space and are tied to the principle of sufficient reason, which have to do with phenomenal life, but not the thing-in-itself identified as the will (*SW* 1:174), which has no commerce with phenomenal reality but dwells alone in its own willing.

Having established to his own satisfaction the absolute primacy of eternal, unchanging reality, grounded in his reinterpretation of the Kantian *noumena/phenomena* distinction, it becomes easier to see what it was about post-Kantian philosophy of history that so incensed Schopenhauer, namely, its insistence that change and even progress were not only possible but desirable, and its refusal in the end to accept the clear distinction between phenomenal reality and eternal truth. The Kantian answer to the question, "how is experience possible?" becomes progressively less and less convincing to Schopenhauer as German philosophy moves from Kant, to Jacobi's denial of Kantian reason and his assertion that rationalism led inevitably to nihilism; Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie* and Kantian *Satz des Bewußtseins*; Fichte's denial of the *Ding an sich* and his subjectivist *Ich*-philosophy; Schelling's Romantic appropriation of Kant; and finally Hegel's attempt to reestablish the primacy of absolute knowledge through a philosophy of spirit. Hegel's thought in particular depends on a dynamic and process-oriented dialectic which is the antithesis of Schopenhauer's lionization of a static, unchanging, and eternal *noumenon*. Hegel's "dialectical notion is not the fixed and stable sum-total of abstract characters, but a concrete totality that itself evolves the particular differences of all the facts that belong to this totality" (Marcuse 1999: 158). Such an evolving dynamic is anathema to Schopenhauer. He was appalled by what he saw as a radical and idiotic trend away from Kant's basic distinctions, and he saw the developing Absolute Idealist emphasis on change, novelty, and progress as a crude atomism or mechanism, bereft of intellectual rigor and culminating in a state of cultural ignorance "brought about through the shallowness, barbarity, and nescience of Hegel" (Schopenhauer *SW* 2:392). There is an even more pessimistic reading of Schopenhauer's condemnation of the post-Kantian embrace of change and process provided by Simmel (1991: 8–9), however: "For Schopenhauer the inner rhythm of human life appears as an unremitting monotony … It is the absence of the idea of evolution

which condemns the world and mankind to being always the same, without solace." In any event, nowhere is Hegelian shallowness more on display for Schopenhauer than in the nineteenth century's emphasis on the importance of history: and this brings us to one of his most specific attacks on Hegel, and a theme that Nietzsche himself takes up early on, namely, the use and misuse of history by philosophers.

Philosophy has little or no use for history, according to Schopenhauer. His estimation of history's relationship to philosophy is founded on his quest for unchanging philosophical truth, and such truth is not to be found in either the historical record as such, or in intellectual meditation upon and speculative thought about history. He memorably writes that poetry tells us more truth about humanity than history does (Schopenhauer *SW* 1:343; 2:563; Schopenhauer is referencing Aristotle's *Poetics* 1451b). He likens the relationship of history to poetry to that between portrait painting and historical painting: "the one gives us the individual truth, the other, the universal truth; the one has the truth of *appearance* and can certify it from that; the other has the truth of the *idea* [i.e. the Platonic ἰδέα] which, not to be found in any particular appearance, speaks from them all" (Schopenhauer *SW* 1:342). Poetic writing is more immediate, according to Schopenhauer, and relates the Idea, the *noumena*, far better than history, which is at best second-hand information and merely relates what has been, not what is both now and eternally. In a rather stunning reversal of Schopenhauer's usual quasi-Platonic stance, he writes that it is the historian, not the poet, who at best deals in phantoms, in second-hand false dreams and pictures of unreality, such that Schopenhauer writes, "I believe that I may be allowed to presume that in history there is more that is false than is true" (*SW* 1:343). Curiously, Schopenhauer's rejection of history is itself an important claim about the status of history, namely that history as written is unable to mediate the truth of the world to us, and is thus a *historical* claim. Moreover, as a philosophical reading of history, it is tantamount to expressing something like a philosophy of history. Along these lines, I agree completely with Graña's (1988: 95) observation: "even when Plato, St. Augustine, or Schopenhauer dismiss history – in the sense of human travail as meaningless – they are indeed expressing a *philosophy* of history." Schopenhauer's vision of the uselessness of history for philosophy is grounded in a commitment to what is actually of *value* in history, namely the historical achievement of thinkers such as Plato and Kant, and the historical mischief which is caused when their legitimate insights are modified or ignored (say, by the likes of Hegel). Nevertheless, in claiming that history cannot arrive at any lasting truths about the world, and in condemning thus the philosophic use of history by thinkers such as Hegel, Schopenhauer has in mind two ideas, principally. One, history is insufficiently scientific (that is, it is not *wissenschaftliche*), and two, it is insufficiently general. I shall take these accusations in turn,

for they illuminate not only Schopenhauer's reaction to Hegel, but inform the larger anti-Hegelian worldview that Nietzsche imbibed from Schopenhauer.

Schopenhauer's insistence that philosophy be scientific has to do with science's vaunted attention to detail and method, which "opens up the way to knowledge of the general and the particular" (Schopenhauer *SW* 2:563). In Schopenhauer's case, his main philosophical interest is in the general, that is, the universal, unchanging eternal, in which the particulars merely participate and thus are at best only pointers or indicators towards the truth of existence. Schopenhauer does not envision philosophy as a sort of *ancilla scientiae*, however; quite the opposite. True philosophy, *qua* true, "hovers over [all of the sciences] as the most universal, and thus the most important, form of knowledge, promising clues to that which the others have only prepared the way" (*SW* 2:563). History is not a science, however, as it deals only with particulars and with immediacy, without the aid or support of general concepts which alone are able to comprehend that which always and necessarily is. Like Hegel, Schopenhauer is concerned that philosophy marshal all its energies in order to "overcome the contingent" (Hegel *VPW* 29; *Werke* 18:55), and for surprisingly similar reasons. However, the two philosophers are in deep methodological as well as spiritual disagreement over the role history is able to play in this all-important overcoming. For Schopenhauer, "mere history cannot properly enter into this succession of knowledge, for it cannot boast the same advantage as the others; it lacks the fundamental character of science, which is the *subordination* of the known; instead it boasts merely the *coordination* of the known" (Schopenhauer *SW* 2:563–64). That is, history is able to neatly arrange the given facts of the world as presented to it, but is unable to rise to the larger task of bringing all those facts under its sway and interpreting them as a single unified whole (which is exactly what philosophy of history usually purports to do).

A concern with contingency or *Zufälligkeit* unites most major post-Kantian thinkers in one way or another, and Schopenhauer is no exception. For Fichte, contingency is the *Anstoß* or "bone in the throat" (Žižek 2012a: 174–75) which the *Ich* encounters. "The I must posit itself in order to be an I at all; but it can posit itself only insofar as it posits itself as limited … [thus] if the I is to posit itself at all, it must simply discover itself to be limited, a discovery that Fichte characterizes as a 'check' or *Anstoß* to the free, practical activity of the I" (Breazeale 2012). For Schelling, "philosophy is the only science that leaves nothing undiscussed as it passes, and which above all proceeds from fundamentals; thus it must always first ground and secure its subject matter for itself, relying neither upon experience, nor upon some higher science, nor upon some merely contingent fact" (Schelling *SW* 3:2:147). And for Hegel, contingency is the welter of actual historical events which must be shown to be constitutive of the outworking of spirit and the elimination (*entfernen*) of

which philosophy takes as its ultimate concern (Hegel *VPW* 29). As I will discuss in section 9.1, the common interpretation of Hegel's *List der Vernunft* is wrong because even though history is a slaughter-bench upon whose blank pages the times of peace remain unwritten, the violence and loss of history remains itself a mere cipher of metahistorical meaning within this reading. But Hegel does not believe this. True, Hegel believes that the smallness of individuals is lost in the sweep of historical necessity. But the smallness *matters*, necessity is built upon such particularities. Schopenhauer rejects such an idea. The role of the all-important will for Schopenhauer in the "subordination of the known" must be given its due (and in this sense of *der Wille* there is a close affinity between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche). As Simmel (1991: 46) observes, for Schopenhauer, "only the doctrine of existence as will, that is, as absolute non-rationality, can reveal the full dualism between scientific and metaphysical man." Accordingly, Schopenhauer believes that philosophers who follow Fichte or Hegel in developing a philosophy of history are pursuing a blind alley, and leading others into it, for there simply can *be* no system of history; and while history does represent what Schopenhauer calls "rational knowledge" (Schopenhauer *SW* 2:564) it is not scientific (i.e. universal and subordinating) and so of no use to philosophy.

Because history deals only with particulars and so is not scientific, it cannot be trusted to lead into true and lasting knowledge, which is general and universal. In history, only that which is universal can be trusted as true; as examples Schopenhauer cites "the periods of time, the succession of kings, revolutions, wars" and so forth. "Thus history is more interesting the more special it is, but it is also the less trustworthy; and in this regard it approximates a novel" (*SW* 2:565; it is worth noting that the German word for "novel" used here by Schopenhauer, *der Roman*, can be used figuratively to approximate the English "screed," surely pointing up the dubious value history has for presenting actual truth according to Schopenhauer). Hegel's emphasis on the *Welthistorische Seele* such as Caesar or Napoleon in his philosophy of history is for Schopenhauer an example par excellence of special, particular, individual history – perhaps interesting, but finally worthless for the pursuit of actual, eternal truth. Such history is the direct opposite of philosophy (*SW* 2:566), which teaches the eternality of all that is, and not the passing away of phenomenal people and events. Of course, Hegel was not alone in his quasi-mythological assessment of Napoleon's importance. Emerson devoted one of his "Representative Men" essays (1850) to Bonaparte, and wrote, "Such a man was wanted, and such a man was born; a man of stone and iron … He respected the power of nature and fortune, ascribed to it his superiority … Again he said, speaking of his son, 'My son cannot replace me; I could not replace myself. I am the creature of circumstances'" (Emerson 1983: 731). Schopenhauer's concern over this sort of quasi-philosophical use of history leads directly into what he

thinks is particularly heinous in Hegelian "pseudo-philosophy": Hegel's "barbaric and bromidic realism [*ein roher und platter Realismus*]" (Schopenhauer *SW* 2:567) – closely akin to what Nietzsche will later condemn as Hegel's "idolatry of the factual [*Götzendienste des Thatsächlichen*]" (Nietzsche *KGW* 3:1:305) – which mistakes transitory, historical *phenomena* for the underlying, universal *noumena* of Kant and Plato, rightly understood (Schopenhauer *SW* 2:569). Where Hegel prefers the dialectical flow and spiritual dynamism of the world-historical development, Schopenhauer craves the calm and eternal universality of the ever-present and changeless now. Indeed, Schopenhauer comes very near to playing Parmenides to Hegel's Heraclitus: "True philosophy of history consists in the insight that, in the midst of endless jumble and massive change, one nevertheless always has before one only the self-same unvarying essence, carrying on today just as it did yesterday and evermore" (*SW* 2:570). The eternally unchanging essence of existence, whether understood as the Vedantic identification of all things with Brahma, or Plato's eternally existing and paradigmatic εἶδη, or the Schopenhauerian rejection of the flux of representation in favor of the essential and eternal status of the will, is the only proper subject matter for philosophical speculation and investigation.

Schopenhauer sums up his negative estimation of history's usefulness for philosophy by saying that if one has read Herodotus, one has read enough of history; nothing subsequent will happen, all that can occur and will occur is contained within the span of ancient Greek history (*SW* 2:570), demonstrating in his own way the biblical pronouncement that there is nothing new under the sun (Eccl. 1:9). Schopenhauer puts it succinctly: *Eadem, sed aliter*, "the same, but otherwise." As such, there *is* a virile pronouncement of the certainty of the end of history in nineteenth-century German thought, but it is put forward by Schopenhauer, not by Hegel. Moreover, this end of history is presented expressly in order to *combat* the Hegelianizing of history, with its open-ended commitment to the particularity of world-historical processes and its reliance for its truth upon the changes and vicissitudes of human historical existence. Schopenhauer certainly had no impression that Hegel intended to end history with his thought.

Schopenhauer does not feel as if history is of absolutely no worth, however, though philosophy of history as philosophers have conceived of it certainly is. History is valuable in that it can have a useful psychological or existential effect, Schopenhauer writes. History can tell us who we are, for "a people first becomes completely conscious of itself through its history. As such, history may be seen to be the rational self-consciousness [*das vernünftige Selbstbewußtsein*] of the human race" (*SW* 2:571). Moreover, history has a humanizing effect upon those who study it, "so that it is only possible through history that it becomes a whole, becomes humanity as such. This is the true value of history … its being a personal concern of the human race" (*SW* 2:572).

Note, however, that this is again a merely contingent, individual concern, and however useful it is, it will still be unable to lead philosophy in its pursuit of eternal truth, for it only has to do with that which is particular, the concern of this person or that community; history has nothing at all to do with the unchangeable and universal truth which lies behind history itself. Nietzsche will eventually reject this anti-historical bias of Schopenhauer's (and to this extent Nietzsche is closer to Hegel than to Schopenhauer), but to the end of his days Nietzsche will hold Schopenhauer to be something of a courageous philosophical demigod, committed to rooting out quasi-intellectual sophistry and weak-minded attempts at squaring the philosophical circle. In his *Untimely Meditations* Nietzsche will call Schopenhauer an example for the entire world, even at a time when Nietzsche had long since moved out of Schopenhauer's philosophical orbit. Despite the fact that Nietzsche believes in the power of history for human self-realization (or rather, the power of individual persons bounded within history to achieve beauty and greatness), he will follow Schopenhauer in heaping scorn upon those who, presumably like Hegel, seem to make of history an inexorable and brightly lit pathway leading to the inner truth of existence and life.

2.3 Burckhardt and the positivity of history

Schopenhauer's criticism of Hegel was not popular among the majority of Schopenhauer's students at Berlin. His well-known attempt to undermine Hegel's lecture classes by scheduling his own at identical times backfired on him, and Schopenhauer's academic star, never high in the educational firmament of Berlin in any event, began to set. However, it would be a mistake to believe that his criticisms of the philosophy of history, and Hegel's philosophy of history in particular, had little influence. They were deeply meaningful to Nietzsche, as we have seen, but they also had their effect upon the intelligentsia at large in the German-speaking world, and beyond. Even among historians, whose discipline Schopenhauer had banished from *wissenschaftliche* society as Plato had banished the practitioners of dramatic poetry, Schopenhauer had his supporters, or at least those who recognized and approved of his attack on Hegel's perceived positivism and shallow reliance on contingent facts. One such historian was Nietzsche's colleague at the University of Basel, Jakob Burckhardt (1818–97). Burckhardt, a Renaissance historian and profound admirer of Schopenhauer's work, gave a series of lectures in Basel in 1868–71 on world history attended by Nietzsche, which purported to detail not the events of history so much as the cultural influences which determined the course of history. Published in 1905 as *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, these lectures developed a critique of Hegelianism which Nietzsche found immediately persuasive. For example, in 1875, Nietzsche wrote, "Where

are the historians who are not swayed by the general nonsense of the outlook of things – above all, the bright optimism of science? I see only one – Burckhardt" (Nietzsche *KGW* 4:1:132). By "science" Nietzsche here does not mean the methodical universalism which Schopenhauer praised, but the Hegelian use of the word *Wissenschaft* to denote the totality of knowledge available to the philosopher in such works as *Wissenschaft der Logik*. It may seem a fine distinction, but it was a very real one to Nietzsche, as well as Schopenhauer. "The influence of Burckhardt upon Nietzsche was significant," writes Schmidt, especially Burckhardt's views on Hellenism and tragedy. "Most of all it was the dark core of Greek culture that Burckhardt exposed which captured Nietzsche's imagination and appealed to his already sophisticated conception of the ancient world" (Schmidt 2001: 193), and it was this core which informed Nietzsche's critique of German culture in his first work, *The Birth of Tragedy*. Walter Kaufmann (1968: 28) is reticent on the subject of Burckhardt's influence upon Nietzsche. However, Houlgate (1986: 27) goes into greater detail about the younger scholar's debt to Burckhardt, and makes a much more persuasive argument.

Burckhardt does not address Schopenhauer's attack on Hegelianism directly in his lectures. While Schopenhauer had rejected the philosophy of history per se (stating, it will be remembered, that all "systems of history" are bereft of philosophical truth), Burckhardt rejects the sort of *use* to which he believes Hegel and others have put the philosophy of history. Like Nietzsche, who found his own anti-Hegelian voice partly in the work of his colleague in Basel, Burckhardt is concerned with the influence Hegelian philosophies of history have on the development of culture, though like Hegel, Burckhardt believes that history is a process, "the concentration of movements in those great individuals, their prime movers and chief expression, in whom the old and new meet for a moment in personal form" (Burckhardt 1905: 1). In Burckhardt's work, the issue of Hegel's historicist aggrandizement comes to the fore for the first time in a form recognizable as the end of history thesis, though it waits for Nietzsche, and then Engels, to give it its definitive form. Burckhardt was an intellectual follower of Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), at least in the sense that for Burckhardt, the specifics of history and the individual cultures and historical fates of peoples most interested him; indeed, Burckhardt was to "bring to perfection" this sort of historiography, particularly in his work on the Italian Renaissance. For Burckhardt, "the key to understanding history is human culture in its intellectual and artistic expression," (Meinecke 1965: 152) and this emphasis on art and aesthetics was particularly appealing to Nietzsche. "Art is not only autonomous but represents a second and higher reality on earth which transcends and redeems the empirical course of history" (Walker 2002: 124). Generalized philosophies of history of the kind that Hegel wrote, wherein what Hegel called *original* and *reflective* history

was passed over in favor of *philosophical* history (Hegel *VPW* 3–22), were dismissed as too optimistic and thinly conceived. Burckhardt favored looking at the actual events of history as occurring within a complex of three powers, as he calls them: the state, religion, and culture (Burckhardt 1905: 1). His historical observations "make no attempt at system, nor lay any claim to 'historical principles'" because "the philosophy of history is a centaur, a *contradictio in adjecto*, for history coordinates and so is unphilosophical, whereas philosophy subordinates and so is unhistorical" (Burckhardt 1905: 2). Burckhardt accepts the Schopenhauerian idea that philosophy is, as he puts it, "high above" history, but for that very reason it makes no sense to approach history philosophically. History deals with facts, not values, and to read value and idea into history is to mistake history for philosophy, to indulge in a contradiction in terms. History cannot be philosophical, and vice versa. To Burckhardt and others, a prime example of this sort of confusion is Hegel's philosophy of history.

Burckhardt tackles Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history at the outset of his *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen*, in order to set the stage for his own historical investigations, and also because Hegel represented for him the doubtful exuberance of all philosophers who attempt to speculate about history. Unlike Nietzsche, Burckhardt obviously had first-hand experience with Hegel's published texts and lectures, for he takes up many of Hegel's specific claims about history and philosophy. He cites Hegel's important claim that "the only thought which philosophy brings with it is the simple idea of reason – the idea that reason governs the world and thus world history is a rational process" (Hegel *Werke* 12:20). Not surprisingly, Burckhardt makes light of such claims, averring that rather than beginning with an assertion that history *must* be rational as a fundamental given, such a claim should rather be proven, or if unprovable, abandoned altogether (Burckhardt 1905: 3). He is dubious of Hegel's Enlightenment-era idea that humankind has progressed morally since ancient times (likely a result of his study of and affinity for Herder's thought, which also rejects the idea that primal cultures were any more or less moral than contemporary societies), culminating in the twin achievements of political and spiritual (existential) freedom. In fact, Burckhardt asserts that "the power of morality stands no higher, nor is there more of it, than in so-called barbarous times of old. We may be sure that even among the pole-house dwellers men gave their lives for each other. Good and evil, perhaps even fortune and misfortune, may have kept roughly an even pace across all the various times and cultures" (Burckhardt 1905: 66). Burckhardt even says that Hegel "cautiously" toys with the idea of perfectibility, ending with the idea that "our time is the consummation of all time, or very nearly so, so that the entire past may be seen as fulfilled in us," and for this reason Hegel calls his history a theodicy (Burckhardt 1905: 3). Finally,

he says that while the theodic story is often embraced by philosophers of history eager to see their own time as the vanishing point of historical evil and the dawn of a new age of reason and enlightenment, it is properly religious history that should claim the laurel for inventing that hermeneutic, beginning with Augustine's *De civitate dei*, "which stands at the forefront of all theodicies" (Burckhardt 1905: 4).

A crucial element of what Nietzsche must have found attractive in Burckhardt's thought was the latter's refusal to countenance chronologically satisfactory accounts of history, that is, history told as the linear and inevitable progress of one event to another, with each event containing and completing the other like a well-constructed set of matryoshka dolls in a *mise en abîme*. This sort of writing and thinking about history, Burckhardt says, will inevitably lead one to begin to discern repeating patterns in world history that are not there. Hegel, for instance, accepted the "longitudinal" approach to history, according to Burckhardt, wherein philosophy "follows in the wake of history" (Burckhardt 1905: 2) and so is in a position to somehow account for the events in history through its own presuppositions and speculative systems. In other words, "philosophers of history regard the past as a contrast to and preliminary stage of our own time as the full development" (Burckhardt 1905: 4), whereas Burckhardt refuses to read history in such a linear way. His critique of Hegel is here correct, as far as it goes; one need only study Hegel's philosophy of religion to see the detail which Hegel gives to the various manifestations of human religiosity, in order not to deprecate them, but to show how later religious developments necessitated earlier ones, building on them and preserving what was important in them (Dale 2006b). Burckhardt's opposition to finding linear trajectories in history is a result of his acceptance of Schopenhauerian pessimism; if trajectories could be found, they could be read as *progressive* trajectories, and progress was something Burckhardt was unwilling to locate within historical narratives. His pessimism was somewhat at odds with his faith in Enlightenment culture (recall that his reputation rested on his work on the Italian Renaissance). In fact, "Burckhardt's pessimism concealed a germ of faith in the ultimate creative potential of humanity," according to White (1975: 263). However, though "he looked forward to the possibility of a rebirth of culture in the future, he held out no hope that men might contribute to that rebirth by any positive action they might take in the present." Nietzsche breaks with this particular brand of Schopenhauerian pessimism in his own life-affirming doctrine of the *Übermensch*, who wills his own meaning and replaces ethics with beauty. However, Nietzsche remains loyal to Burckhardt's basic ideas, referring to Burckhardt as "*großer Lehrer*" in a last letter written in 1888 (Nietzsche *KGB* 3:5:574).

Burckhardt contrasts the linear model of writing history (and philosophy) with his own Schopenhauerian model, which claims only to detail "the

recurrent, constant, and the typical, as it echoes in us and is knowable through us [*das sich Wiederholende, Konstante, Typische als ein in uns Anklingendes und Verständliches*]" (Burckhardt 1905: 4). It is tempting to see here a possible influence on Nietzsche's *ewige Wiederkehr* or eternal recurrence (Nietzsche *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* §341; *Zarathustra* passim), though Kaufmann (1968: 318–19) contends that Nietzsche encountered this idea in Greek philosophy and was aware of the concept in a work by Heinrich Heine. Nevertheless, Burckhardt's insistence that history is a study of constant types which occur again and again cannot but have appealed to Nietzsche, especially as it accords with the Schopenhauerian doctrine of the eternality of the absolute. According to Löwith (1995: 95), Burckhardt "was of the view that what is 'interesting' in history is what is seemingly uninteresting, namely that which is constant and what repeats itself in all change, because humans are as they always already were and always will be." Burckhardt is not suggesting a metaphysical doctrine; he is merely explicating a way of undertaking historiography without succumbing to the siren song of philosophy of history. Still, insofar as Burckhardt was able to mount a strong challenge to the prevalent philosophical tenor of the times by problematizing the idea that history is a tale of upward progress, his challenge to Hegel's claim to stand at the consummation of history appealed to Nietzsche's own sense that something had gone wrong in post-Hegelian German culture. Nietzsche's first serious attempt to come to terms with this culture was his series of essays entitled *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* or *Untimely Meditations* (1873–76). His earlier work *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) was also an attempt to criticize contemporary German positivism, but its Apollonian and Dionysian theme is more a defense of German Romanticism centered on Wagner than a true attack on the literary and historical elements which drew his ire in the *Meditations*. His unpublished 1873 essay "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense" is also an expression of his youthful romanticism, though it contains a critique of the epistemological hubris of the Enlightenment which will find later echo in his *Kulturkampf*, of which the *Untimely Meditations* is the opening salvo. In the *Meditations*, Hegel is for the first time linked with the end of history idea. It is not an exaggeration to say that the end of history controversy begins with Nietzsche, via Burckhardt, though it extends into the twentieth century, through Engels, to writers such as Alexandre Kojève, Allan Bloom, Samuel Huntington, and Francis Fukuyama.

2.4 Nietzsche's five words

At the end of 1870, German culture once again seemed to stand on the brink of a new age. The culmination of the Franco-Prussian war with the utter defeat of Napoleon III and the Treaty of Frankfurt (1871), which set the boundaries between France and the German Empire and recognized the accession of

Wilhelm I of Prussia as Emperor of the Second German Reich, had brought about unprecedented hopes in the German peoples for a future free from war and promising prosperity, honor, and cultural unity. As Ozment (2005: 229) points out:

> During the forty-three years between unification and the outbreak of World War I, German population rose over 60 percent, to sixty-eight million. Only the United States had greater productive capacity. And in terms of shared values and self-assurance, Germans were then reaching across social lines. Despite the persisting obstacles to political unity and colonial expansion, they believed their culture to be the most historically rooted and destined of the European states. In 1890 "Deutschland über Alles" began to be sung in the schools and on national holidays, a transregional German anthem that nurtured a national identity.

But not everyone was equally enthusiastic about the new German national identity and the dreams of cultural assertion that accompanied it: "while Bismarck's wars had expanded Germany's frontiers and had given it a new constitution, the new Kaiserreich remained deeply divided along political, regional, and confessional lines" (Williamson 2004: 234). One of the people most at odds with the new triumphalism in German culture was Friedrich Nietzsche, who had served in the Franco-Prussian War as a medical orderly, and who was then the youngest professor ever appointed to teach classical philology at the University of Basel. Nietzsche's first published work, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), was in part an attempt to deflate the "insatiable greed of optimistic knowledge" (Nietzsche *KGW* 3:1:98) which he felt lay at the heart of Socratic thought, but which also stood as a cipher for contemporary German philosophy and the *Bildungphilister*, "cultural Philistines" who announced the apotheosis of German culture with the arrival of the Second Reich.

Despite Nietzsche's later harsh assessment of *The Birth of Tragedy*, the cultural critique he mounts there is not entirely foreign to his later attacks in the *Untimely Meditations* on the hubris of German *Wissenschaft*. As a matter of fact, in an important sense *Tragedy* anticipates many of the most important themes in *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*. For example, in describing the Socratic preference for absolute knowledge arrived at through a thoroughgoing dialectic, Nietzsche writes "one also finds a profound delusion which first appears in the person of Socrates, namely the unshakeable belief that thought … reaches down into the deepest abysses of being, and that it is capable not simply of understanding existence, but correcting it. This sublime metaphysical delusion is an instinct which belongs inseparably to *Wissenschaft*" (Nietzsche *KGW* 3:1:95). Not only does Nietzsche anticipate Freud here, it is hard not to see a parallel attack on Hegelianism, particularly Hegel's magnum opus, the *Wissenschaft der Logik*, which begins with an explication of being. Nietzsche goes on to say that the antidote to this metaphysical delusion is art – and though he later rejects this diagnosis insofar as he comes to reject its source, Richard

Wagner's theory of *Gesamtkunstwerk* and Wagner's increasing preoccupation with the destiny of German culture,[3] he never turns away from the underlying point, namely that *Wissenschaft* is unable to plumb the depths that it thinks it can, and when it tries, it invariably fails. For Nietzsche, post-Hegelian philosophy of history is a prime example of this "sublime metaphysical delusion" and Nietzsche deals with it directly in the essay "On the Uses and Abuses of History for Life" in his *Untimely Meditations*.

Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations* is a collection of essays written over the period 1873–76 and concerned with the dichotomy of objectivity and passion as evinced in the human pursuit to find meaning in life. Though the collection at first blush seems to be a hodge-podge of unrelated essays, three of them semi-biographical (the first, third, and final, dealing with David Strauss, Schopenhauer, and Wagner, respectively) and one of them, the second, dealing with history, in reality there are themes that underlie the concerns of these papers and give them a more or less tight coherence. These themes, dealing with the pursuit of personal meaning in a world increasingly sure that it has all the answers, are what make the essays *unzeitgemäss* or untimely: they cut against the grain of the prevailing *Zeitgeist* in German culture in the era immediately following the Franco-Prussian war and the establishment of a unified German Reich. As the opening battle in a life-long war Nietzsche will fight with the prevailing ideas of ethics, philosophy, and German culture, the *Meditations* is "warlike" and "attempts at assassination" as Nietzsche puts it in *Ecce Homo* (*KGW* 6:3:314, 315), bent on insisting that "there is no more malignant misunderstanding than to believe that the great military successes of the Germans proved anything in favor of this 'culture' – or, of all things, its triumph over France" (*KGW* 6:3:314). But the essays are more than this. Zuckert says that the *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* represent the human search for self-knowledge, the recognition of human suffering "and the desire to justify that suffering by showing that it has a purpose" (Zuckert 1976: 71). For Nietzsche, such purpose will be found in resisting the anesthetizing call of cultural aggrandizement,

[3] It is important not to mischaracterize the "Germanism" in Wagner's work. Nietzsche's move away from Wagner was as much a rejection of Wagnerian otherworldly *pessimism* as anything else; in this sense, cutting his philosophical ties with Schopenhauer and his social ties with Wagner were all of a piece. To reject Schopenhauerian thought was also to reject Wagner. Magee argues that Wagner's operas beginning with *Tristan und Isolde* and culminating with *Parsifal* were increasingly Schopenhauerian in their renunciation of the phenomenal world and their search for a higher meaning. This was anathema to Nietzsche's counter-cultural project, particularly in texts such as *Also sprach Zarathustra* (1883–85) and his works following (he called *Parsifal* an "incitement to anti-nature"). Nietzsche, writes Magee, "went for *Parsifal* tooth and nail." This is in part because *Parsifal* so unapologetically draws on religious imagery in its stress on *Mitleid* (compassion), but also because *Parsifal* "represents a culminating point in Wagner's development beyond politics into metaphysics" (Magee 2000: 284). Beyond even personal animus (of which there was a great deal), Wagner came to represent for Nietzsche the quintessence of life-denying metaphysics.

and hewing closely to the authentic individual path towards knowledge and meaning. Each of the subjects of the *Meditations* serves as an example, either a warning or an encouragement, of how the search may be undertaken.

Nietzsche's search for meaning and knowledge beyond the prescriptions of his own time is described in a series of essays which make up the body of the *Meditations*. David Strauss (Chapter 1), Tübingen theologian and scholar of the historical Jesus, represents the form this search takes when it embraces the positivism and optimism of German *Wissenschaft* married to German culture. Nietzsche then details the reading of history (Chapter 2) which gives rise to the perceived cultural triumphalism of Strauss, and mounts an attack on such self-satisfied philosophies of history by juxtaposing them with his own reading of history which allows for the development of an individual life, rather than the life of an entire nation. Finally, Nietzsche holds out the counter-examples of Schopenhauer and Wagner (Chapters 3 and 4), men who were able to deal with the evil and suffering in history by authentic strength of will, personal development, honesty, and individualism. Thus, the first meditation entails Nietzsche's critique of *Bildung*; the second entails Nietzsche's critique of *Wissenschaft*; the final two meditations entail possible solutions to the impasses brought about by a pathological German science of culture. Taken together, the *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* are something of a Nietzschean theodicy, then: they wrestle with the problems of suffering and historical justification, and they propose a way out of this problem. The fact that Nietzsche eventually broke with the thinking of both Schopenhauer and Wagner in no way undermines the critique Nietzsche lays out in the *Untimely Meditations*. Indeed, Nietzsche never repudiated it as he did the *Birth of Tragedy*, though he did come to realize of the four meditations, "at bottom they speak only of me" (Nietzsche *KGW* 6:3:318). In fact, Schopenhauer's distaste for using history, especially as Hegel envisioned it, to discover philosophical truth is what really lies between the early Nietzsche and Hegel. Once Nietzsche has left behind his earlier devotion to Schopenhauer (accomplished by 1870 at the latest), he is more willing to admit the importance of Hegel, especially Hegel's insistence that change and history are very important themes in philosophical investigation. Schopenhauer preferred literature to history, and this will be important to Nietzsche's break with Schopenhauer's philosophy in the late 1860s. Nevertheless, Schopenhauer is able to remain a paradigmatic figure in the *Meditations* because of his strong stand against the stupidity and arrogance he perceived in his own time, and the strength Nietzsche was able to draw from Schopenhauer's example. Santayana draws a clear line between the philosophical inheritance of Schopenhauer and of Nietzsche: Schopenhauerian "pessimism founded on reflection would become [Nietzschean] optimism founded on courage; the suspense of the will in contemplation would yield to a more biological account of intelligence and taste; finally in the place of pity and asceticism … Nietzsche would set up the

duty of asserting the will at all costs and being cruelly but beautifully strong" (Santayana 1916: 114). Though Santayana overstates the "biological" aspects of Nietzsche's thought (later he stresses that this should be thought of as "physical" or *aesthetic*), his brief assessment remains a powerful attempt to come to terms with the two thinkers' work.

The second essay in the *Untimely Meditations*, "On the Advantages and Drawbacks of History for Life" (*Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*), was written in 1874. It is a wide-ranging essay, but it concerns my study because of its rejection of a certain type of philosophical historicism, which Nietzsche broadly represents as Hegelian but singles out in the writings of Eduard von Hartmann (1842–1906), particularly Hartmann's first book, *Die Philosophie des Unbewußten* (1869). In this work Hartmann combined the pessimism of Schopenhauer and his doctrine of the will, with a pantheistic absolute (which Hartmann called the unconscious, with a nod to the Schopenhauerian psychology of force and willpower) which grounds and pervades history, and which manifests itself as something objectively and scientifically knowable ("The Unconscious Will in the Independent Functions of the Spinal Cord and Ganglia" is a representative chapter). Gardner (2010: 188) pictures the uneasy synthesis of Hegel and Schopenhauer in Hartmann: "Hegelian 'optimism' regarding the world is squared with Schopenhauerian pessimism: ours is the best of all possible worlds *and yet* its very existence is the worst of all metaphysical possibilities (as is the existence of *any* world, since all worlds presuppose the fusion of Idea and Will)," which Schopenhauer rejects as a false Kantian dichotomy privileging *phenomena* over *noumena*. In a section entitled "Metaphysics of the Unconscious," Hartmann advances a nineteenth-century version of Leibniz's "best of all possible worlds" scenario, wherein "we may with justice confide that the world is contrived and guided as wisely and as well as is possible; that if, among all possible ideas, that of a better world could have lain in the omniscient Unconscious [*allwißenden Unbewußten*], certainly the better one would have come to pass instead of the present one" (Hartmann 1931 II:360). This omniscient Unconsciousness is a perfect blend of the microcosm and the macrocosm; it is felt not only in the autonomic systems of the biological self, but it guides, pervades, and connects cosmic events and historical trajectories in a seamless logic of perfection. In Hartmann's philosophy, the development of the world (both historically and naturalistically) follows a logical necessity (1931 II:358) and the absolute clairvoyance of the Unconscious (1931 II:359) as regards events and causes. Hartmann's psycho-philosophical notion of the all-pervading Unconscious is the Providence of common piety writ large across both science and metaphysics.

Hartmann is able to make such surprisingly positive assertions about the world because, following Schopenhauer, he accepts the starkest division between perception and reality. Eternal logic follows its own predetermined

and flawless path, and is not always open to "subjective prejudice" (1931 I:323), which is unable to see the pattern which the pervasive logic of the Unconscious weaves across time and space. However, "conscious logic gains ground with time, if not in one, yet in the course of many generations," despite the detractors who see naught but evil and error in the course of the outworking of the will of the Unconscious (1931 I:324). The problem of evil as a historical matter is therefore simply a matter of limited outlook. To the delight of anyone who wishes to dismiss Hartmann's philosophy as only the latest permutation of an older, more originary historico-philosophical Hegelian determinism, Hartmann goes on to assert that the "unconscious logic" of such a process, wherein the movements of "historical providence" come to the light of consciousness, "has never been perceived more clearly than by Hegel" (1931 I:324). Hartmann's work is thus only an advance upon the basic teachings on the historical inevitability of progress he perceived as having been laid down by Hegel – at least, this was the conclusion that Nietzsche and others naturally reached. Design in nature means design in history because of "universal necessity [*allgemeine Nothwendigkeit*]" which shows "a single plan and a general superintendence [*inheitlicher Plan und Leitung des Ganzen*]" (1931 II:1), and this confidence leads to Hartmann's assertion, "Undoubtedly since the close of the last century [i.e. since 1800] we have been making approaches to that ideal state where the human race consciously accomplishes its destiny" (1931 II:2). He does not say that humanity has reached its goal just yet, for the great majority of humanity has not reached the light of such conscious freedom. However, "thousands of years of stagnation on one spot of earth should not mislead us, if only this phase of culture has fulfilled its appointed office, and if only at the same time the process of development [*der Entwickelungsprocess*] goes forward at another place" (1931 II:3). Hartmann's work represents something of an apex of mid to late nineteenth-century cultural optimism in Germany, and while he is by no means the last or even best-known example of this sort of philosophical positivity, because he expressly links his reading of history to Hegel's, he functions as something of a midwife for Nietzsche's anti-Hegelian historical critique.

However familiar Nietzsche may or may not have been with Hegel's actual work, he knew Hartmann's writing well, and had nothing but withering scorn for it and the particular species of Hegelianism it represented. For his part, Hartmann was aware of Nietzsche's philosophical writings, though he found them "inadequate" and derivative (Hartmann 1891: 505). As Hartmann was writing as a thinker secure in his position as an important philosopher, and had no inkling that his popularity might soon be on the wane, his assessment of Nietzsche probably reflects not so much rancor against an upstart critic as a sober appraisal of a person he genuinely considered an unoriginal writer and likely did not really understand (cf. Brinton 1941: 176). Nietzsche writes with

scathing irony in the *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* that Hartmann's philosophy cannot be taken seriously, but that "such a production marks its creator as one of the first philosophical parodists of all time; let us then sacrifice at his altar, let us sacrifice to him, the discoverer of true universal medicine … For what medicine could be more effective against the excesses of historical culture than Hartmann's parody of world history?" (Nietzsche *KGW* 3:1:310). Hartmann is portrayed as but a symptom of German cultural and historical malaise: Nietzsche makes clear that Hegel was in great part its cause. Hartmann is a distraction. For example, "The late nineteenth-century, post-Schopenhauerian optimism/pessimism debate, with which Hartmann is so deeply preoccupied, Nietzsche dismisses elsewhere as a 'priestly squabble' (*Pfaffenstreit*)" (Gardner 2010: 198). Nietzsche argues against any study of history (such as that of Hartmann) which breeds a sense of cultural entitlement or moral complacency, and Nietzsche believes that Hegel inculcates both ills. If the lessons of history generate self-satisfied comfort, they lead to a life which is "stunted and degenerate" (Nietzsche *KGW* 3:1:241) and unable to pull itself away from the cloying triumphalism of the age. Such a stifling complacency is the enemy of individual heroic striving and greatness, and results in a sickness which his contemporaries failed to understand: "I believe that we are all suffering from a consuming fever of history and ought at least to recognize that we are suffering from it" (*KGW* 3:1:242). According to Nietzsche, this diagnosis is what makes his essay *unzeitgemäss*, for it acts counter to the central historical claims of the age, namely that a study of history will show the inevitable culmination of events in the Germany of his day.

History studied in such a way is to no one's advantage; it is, as the title of the essay has it, "useless" to life, for it cultivates satisfaction and not striving. Constant meditation upon one's place in history is a dangerous thing, Nietzsche says, for its focus is too much on the past: "the past has to be forgotten if it is not to become the gravedigger of the present" (*KGW* 3:1:247). With his eyes turned to the future (as the subtitle of *Beyond Good and Evil* suggests), Nietzsche finds himself deeply at odds with the intellectual currents of his time, which rightly or wrongly Nietzsche maintains are the result of a rampant and stifling Hegelianism. At the same time, the past is important, for it forms the horizon of human memory, and is the basis for actions in the present and the future. The past is not a map or a master plan. Rather, it is the wellspring of the forms that culture may take in the present. Cultural memory and cultural triumphalism are never confused in Nietzsche – past greatness is no guarantee of present or especially future greatness. However, the unhistorical, that is, the immediate sense of life as it is lived now, unburdened by the weight of the past ("The unhistorical is like an enveloping atmosphere in which life generates itself alone," *KGW* 3:1:248) is also needed in even greater amounts. It is this unhistorical sense of life, the power of pure act uncluttered by the bondage

of historical inevitability, which Nietzsche says German society has lost as a result of its use of history to anesthetize itself in the wake of its triumphal political unification. Nietzsche, who was a classical philologist by training, foresaw grave events on the horizon for any people who achieved an artificial political unity as a *πόλις* without the true sense of relationality and unity that the ideal *πόλις* represented. "It is for German unity in that highest sense that we strive, and strive more ardently than we do for political reunification – the unity of German spirit and life after the abolition of the antithesis of form and content, of inwardness and convention" (Nietzsche *Werke* 3:1:274). Nietzsche's "campaign against Germany" (Hollingdale 1999: 6) was thus a matter of spiritual and cultural strife rather than an overly political stance – though Nietzsche was certainly averse to the German *political* spirit of his time as well.

History is a constant and negative theme for Nietzsche. He writes that his age is oversaturated with history (Nietzsche *KGW* 3:1:275), that it has become too concerned with the process and meaning of history, and such an oversaturation robs society of its future. Such a society's "drive to construct" and its "instinct towards creation will be enfeebled and discouraged" (*KGW* 3:1:291–92), leaving it not with strong and creative members, but only with *epigones*, latecomers or *Spätlinge* who sift through history as "pupils of declining antiquity" (*KGW* 3:1:302) and who are literally emasculated, that is, bereft of the virile and virtuous (from *vir*, "man") quality which drives human existence and life forward into the future. When a society lives too historically, it loses its future. Yet the loss of the future – is this not the end (of history)? An end in which a true future possibility is absent, for all is eternally present, the culmination of the past without the promise of more to come? Here it is appropriate to raise the question of Nietzsche's *die ewige Wiederkunft des Gleichen* or eternal recurrence of the same. In no sense should the question of the eternal recurrence (as it first appears in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* §341, Nietzsche *KSA* 3:571) be understood as a negatively ahistorical reality, as it very well may be in certain religious understandings of cyclical time, such as concepts of reincarnation originating in India. The idea behind the eternal recurrence is a wholesale and despairing *affirmation* of historical existence as it is, and as it always will be; this despair is itself the deepest affirmation of life according to Nietzsche, a desire to have nothing changed about life as it is lived right now, and a rejection of the religious affirmation of some otherworldly hope to which we may cling in order to endure historical existence. In *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* §341 Nietzsche says an awareness of the eternal recurrence is *das grösste Schwergewicht*, the "greatest weight" that can press upon one. "The question in each and every thing, 'Do you wish this one thing over and over and innumerable times over again?' would then lie upon your actions as the greatest weight." One's decision to this question decides how one feels about historical existence – will one wish for it to end, to escape from it, or

will one embrace it and "crave nothing more fervently"? Only within such a closed system could one then make the courageous leap into a will to power.

However one interprets *die ewige Wiederkunft des Gleichen* in Nietzsche's thought, it is manifestly not the sense of history that Nietzsche believes the historical *epigones* of his time have embraced. They extol philosophical progress and the hope of a future glory which is even now breaking into the present with the self-assertion of German culture and the political unification of the Second German Reich. Their preoccupation with history is itself deeply ahistorical, because they believe themselves to stand at the *end* of history, to incarnate history's fulfillment in the specific form it has taken in Wilhelmine Germany. The ahistory that Nietzsche calls for is one that is not preoccupied with history at all, but exults in its acceptance of the conditions of existence as such, and says with Zarathustra's animals, who proclaim him the teacher of the eternal recurrence, "all the years are the same in what is greatest as well as in what is smallest, just as we ourselves are the same in every great year, in what is greatest as well as in what is smallest" (Nietzsche *KSA* 4:276). Nietzsche's *ewige Wiederkunft* is not culmination, but repetition, and as such is the ultimate affirmation of life as it is, not as we would wish it to be. Such a world is trapped in its past, unable to step forward into the vast openness which the uncharted future represents. Is it not entirely possible that the *epigones*, driven by despair at the loss of their own future, might instead proclaim that the future is lost to them because the historical process has come to an end? In this case, there is no future for the *epigones* because they themselves stand at the culmination of history – they represent the end point towards which all futures have always aimed. This is exactly what Nietzsche proposes has happened in his own generation, under the twin influences of Wilhelmine cultural triumphalism and Hegelian philosophical solipsism. With biting sarcasm, Nietzsche puts the words of "a certain very celebrated philosophy" into the mouths of these *antiquarische Spätlinge*, the antiquarian latecomers, who proclaim, "the race is now at its zenith, for only now does it possess knowledge of itself and has revealed itself to itself" (*KGW* 3:1:304). Nietzsche then lays sarcasm aside, and in no uncertain terms insists, "I believe that there has been no dangerous fluctuation or turning of German culture this century which has not been strengthened by the enormous and continuing influence of this philosophy, the Hegelian" (*KGW* 3:1:304). This is Nietzsche's judgment upon Hegel and Hegelianisms, represented most fully within his own intellectual orbit by Hartmann's thickly optimistic writings.

And why should Nietzsche not have rejected this heady blend of power and finality? After all, Hegelian philosophy as understood by Nietzsche equates the most miserable position of history, the loss of the power of the future, with history's highest aim, the perfection and end of history. History, and the loss of the future, thus becomes "the sole sovereign power" over human life (*KGW*

3:1:304). It is at this point that Nietzsche begins his broadside against Hegelian claims to have arrived at the end of history, and consequently this amounts to the first important philosophical occurrence of the end of history myth. Citing Hegel's statement in the *Philosophy of Right*, "*es ist der Gang Gottes in der Welt, daß der Staat ist*" (Hegel *Werke* 7:403), Nietzsche continues: "This Hegelian understanding of history has been contemptuously called God's progress on earth, though the God referred to has been created through history itself" (Nietzsche *KGW* 3:1:304). This is a common complaint about Hegel's philosophy of history, though an often misunderstood one. Nietzsche writes, "this God became transparent and comprehensible to himself inside Hegelian skulls, and has thus ascended all the dialectically possible steps of his evolution until he reached this self-revelation: so that for Hegel the apex and endpoint of the world process coincided with his own Berlin existence" (*KGW* 3:1:304). This is the accusation that lies at the heart of all accounts of Hegel's claim to represent the end of history, and it takes its classic form here in the work of Nietzsche. To Nietzsche, it is a claim based in cultural hubris and historical myopia; to Engels it will represent a philosophically necessary though ideologically misguided direction in Hegel's philosophy. It is crucial to realize, however, that neither Nietzsche nor Engels quotes Hegel on the end of history, or in any way asserts that this was a view that Hegel himself held (though both strongly imply it). Nietzsche's next statement is telling: "Indeed, he *should have said* that everything which came after him was actually nothing more than the musical coda to the world-historical rondo, or, more precisely, superfluous. *He did not say it*: instead, he implanted leaven into the generation which followed him, of admiration for what is called 'the power of history'" (*KGW* 3:1:304–5).

Nietzsche's condemnation of the leaven of historicist hubris is just and deserved. Admiration for the "power of history," and the power wielded by those who seem to command that history (the President of the United States as the "leader of the free world," begging questions about the meaning of freedom, and of leaders, at least), is a source of great suffering and is in constant need of questioning. Here the Nietzschean critique stands on firm ground. And yet it is crucial to take up the next step in the analysis, as Nietzsche does: "*Das hat er nicht gesagt*" – can Nietzsche's five words be passed over without comment? Is not the entirety of the issue to be found here, the root of the ancient tree and all its rotting fruit? Nietzsche's negative hermeneutics on this point have been decisive for all important subsequent readings of Hegel's philosophy of history. All too often the plain fact that "he did not say it" cannot be automatically conflated into "but he certainly meant it" is blithely overlooked. To say "he certainly meant it," as the subsequent tradition mostly does, is a hermeneutical choice to be made, not a philosophical fact to be stated; and it is not even a simple issue of invoking authorial intent, because even if Hegel

had intended it, within the bounds of the system, *he could not have intended it*. Nietzsche's hermeneutical choice here is valid, insofar as he traces the *effects* of Hegel's thought if not the thought itself; after all, many of Hegel's intellectual descendants *have* in fact believed that one can and should locate an end of history somewhere within Hegelian thought, or in the effects of his thought; Hartmann is one, Kojève (following Marx) is another, Fukuyama (following Kojève) a third. Nietzsche does not make the whole thing up from whole cloth. But there is much more at stake than what can and cannot be read into or out of Hegelian philosophy of history. Nietzsche is right, *das hat er nicht gesagt*; Nietzsche's *er hätte sagen müssen* is the philosophically important phrase here, for in it Nietzsche's entire hermeneutic is revealed concerning Hegel and history.

Let us be very careful to notice exactly what is going on in Nietzsche's condemnation of Hegelian historical hubris. Nietzsche thinks Hegel and his followers such as Hartmann are making two claims: one, that history *had* to turn out as it has, and two, the way that it *has* turned out is eminently rational. On the face of it, Hegel does believe something like this; Hegel maintains that "reason rules the world, and that world history is thus a rational process" (Hegel *VPW* 28). Such a claim is the source of Nietzsche's description of Hegelian philosophy as "an idolatry of the factual [*Götzendienste des Thatsächlichen*]" (Nietzsche *KGW* 3:1:305), possibly a swipe at Hegel's well-known statement about the real and the rational in the *Philosophy of Right*, that "*Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig*" (Hegel *Werke* 7:24). This statement, coupled with the Hegelian interest in history, seems to give ample warrant to Nietzsche's claim that Hegel felt that he stood at the end of history and had explained it once for all time. After all, if history is the story of developing rationality writ large across the world stage, and what is rational is what is actual, the existing order should be glorified as the pinnacle of reason, and it is entirely right, as Nietzsche says, to "bend [one's] back and bow [one's] head before the 'power of history' … [and] to do reverence to the whole stepladder of 'success'" (Nietzsche *KGW* 3:1:305). Recall that to mistake Nietzsche's *ewige Wiederkunft* for Hegel's putative *Götzendienste des Thatsächlichen* is to commit a grave error, and to fail to do justice to Nietzsche. Nietzsche is often Whitmanesque in his willingness to embrace vast contradictions, but this is not one of those instances. If serious philosophical reflection on cultural power can be reduced to a meditation on historical inevitability, such that one supreme philosophical system can explain why history had to progress in just this way, at just this time, and that it could progress no further, then of course it would be the ultimate affirmation of the status quo, and would be the perfect target for Nietzsche's ire.

Nietzsche's criticisms are entirely correct, as far as they go. Any system of thought (political, philosophical, or otherwise) which arrogates to itself

the prerogative of ultimate and inevitable power is in desperate need of the Nietzschean revaluation of values. It is equally clear that Nietzsche's devastating attack does apply to Hegel in important respects, and not just various Hegelianisms, then and now. What is not so clear – in fact, what seems flatly untrue – is that it applies to the Hegel whom Nietzsche takes as his target in the *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, or that that Hegel is guilty of his followers' uses and misuses of history. In fact, Nietzsche profoundly misunderstands Hegel on history, in part because of his reliance upon Burckhardt, Hartmann, and others. His attack seems more correctly applied to those of Hegel's followers who, then as now, flush with the triumph of some particular culture, rush to fill in the gaps in Hegel's philosophy (gaps Hegel intentionally left, such as the fate of the future), than to Hegel himself. Moreover, Nietzsche's misunderstanding lies at the heart of what is wrong with the entire end of history mythology. Hegel could not have proclaimed the end of history for a very simple reason: such an end, if it exists, lies in the indeterminate future, and Hegel expressly forbids philosophy to speculate about the future ("philosophy has nothing to do with prophecy," Hegel *VPW* 210). This is a simple fact about Hegelian philosophy that is almost always overlooked, with dire consequences. Hegel certainly does believe that philosophy is able to explicate everything *that is* (which is the truth of Nietzsche's attribution to Hegel of an idolatry of the factual), insofar as Hegel believes everything displays an internal necessity which is amenable to thinking. Making such necessity transparent to thought is at the heart of Hegel's quest for the "elimination of the contingent" (Hegel *VPW* 29).

There is a straightforward Aristotelian clarity to the world for Hegelianism that Nietzsche correctly identifies and thoroughly abhors. Hegel goes further than Aristotle, though. All sense of mystery about the past and present is utterly purged in extreme forms of Hegelian philosophy; Hegel even goes so far as to proclaim that there are no more secrets in God (Hegel *VPR* 1:92), a claim that Aristotle could not have made about his mover that is itself unmoved. This clarity or transparency is due to the explanatory power of Hegel's philosophy, and Hegel's optimistic Aristotelian belief that the nature of reality is amenable to thought and can in fact be known through reason. Hegel writes, "the only notion which philosophy brings with it is the simple idea of *reason*, that reason governs the world, and that world history is therefore a rational process," and furthermore, "That this notion is true, eternal, and omnipotent, that it reveals itself in the world, and that nothing is revealed except *die Idee* in all its honor and majesty – this, as I have said, is what philosophy has proved" (Hegel *Werke* 12:20–21). Nietzsche abhors this sort of positivism, and it leads Heidegger to identify Hegelianism as a paradigmatic example of ontotheological metaphysics ("Truth here always means that the knowable as such is known with a knowledge which is absolutely certain of itself," Heidegger *GA* 11:20). Heidegger's critique of Hegel is important because it shelters an important

caveat to the positivistic reading of Hegel. He says that for Hegel the "knowable as such [*Wißbaren als solchen*] is known" – but Hegel clearly states that there is at least one thing that is unknown and unknowable as such, for it is not real: the future, a permanent not-yet. Philosophy has no access to the future and Hegel is on record stating that the future is no business of *speculative* philosophy – not because the future has already been decided, but because it *has not been*. To speak of Hegel's "speculative" philosophy is not to speak of guesswork (the common meaning of *spekulieren* or "to speculate"):

> Speculative philosophy is the consciousness of the idea [*der Idee*], so that everything is apprehended [*aufgefaßt wird*] as idea … Speculative thinking is to break down a reality into its parts [*ein Wirkliches auflösen*], and to set these parts against each other in such a way that their distinctions are opposed in accordance with the terms of thought, and the reality is apprehended [*gefaßt wird*] as a unity of them both. (Hegel *Werke* 16:30)

Perhaps an even better way to think of *spekulieren* in general is to think of the Latin and Greek behind it. Plato and Aristotle both thematize the notion of θεωρία which is the root of the word "theory" and means "contemplation." That is, θεωρέω is "I look at" or "attend to" something deeply, in Latin *specio* (from which comes "speculation"). Thus for Plato, "the soul must follow reason and remain with it, attending to the true [τὸ ἀληθὲς … θεωμένη]" (*Phaedo* 84a–b), and Aristotle says that the life which leads to complete human fulfillment (ἡ τελεία εὐδαιμονία) is the life of contemplation (θεωρητική) or one that sees life in the right way (Aristotle *Nic. Eth.* 1177a18). θεωρία is a way of seeing or grasping the world aright, one confused by neither opinion (1145b20) nor phenomena (1145b28); θεωρία is the goal of Hegelian *spekulative* (that is, θεωρητικός) philosophy.

Heidegger, in his lecture course on Hegel's *Phenomenology*, says that Hegel is silent about the future; by this he means that it is unimportant for Hegel, because the past is what is decisive for time (Heidegger *GA* 32:116). Heidegger is right that Hegel seldom speaks about the future, but for the most part he is wrong about Hegel's reasons. Hegel is very precise about the limits of philosophy, though this is often overlooked because he is so loud in his proclamations as to what philosophy *can* know. Philosophy for Hegel may and indeed should concern itself with what is and what has been, and in this sense Heidegger is correct, the past is what is decisive. But more to the point, the matter before Hegelian speculative philosophy is what is now, and what had been before – but the future is *not* philosophy's to decide. It is only in this sense that Hegel is silent about the future. One must take very seriously Hegel's strictures against philosophy turning into prophecy, "for prophecy is not the business of the philosopher … In philosophy … we are concerned not with what belongs exclusively to the past or the future, but with that which is now, both now and forever – in short, with reason" (Hegel *Werke* 12:114). One can

argue about whether or not Hegel felt that things *had* to progress into the future in exactly the same way that they had progressed up to his historical present, but one simply cannot say (as Nietzsche did) that in essence Hegel felt that the entire circus of history had packed up its big tent and rolled on down the road. There was, for Hegel, much that could still happen, much that would, and it was far more than the "musical coda to the world-historical rondo" Nietzsche described. Nietzsche is right that Hegel did not proclaim the end of history. It is doubtful, however, if he is right that Hegel *should* have done so. In fact, Hegel would have found it impossible to have done so, and been faithful to the internal demands of his own system. In the end, for all his persuasiveness on the tragedy of historical hubris, Nietzsche is wrong about Hegel and the end of history – however correct he is about Hegelian *antiquarische Spätlinge*, then and now.

3 Hegel and Engels

> A man who judges every philosopher not by the enduring and progressive part of his activity but by what is necessarily transitory and reactionary – by the system – would have done better to remain silent.
>
> Friedrich Engels, letter to Conrad Schmidt, 1 July 1891

3.1 The post-Hegelian reaction in Prussia

Scholarly discussions about Hegel, history, and progress towards an end frequently culminate with a sustained investigation of Marx's interpretation and application of Hegel.[1] There are good reasons for this. Flechtheim (1942: 50) observes that "Human history is, for Marx, perhaps still more genuinely than for Hegel, the story of an everlasting, even if from time to time interrupted, true progress of the 'humanization' of mankind." Marx's use of Hegel centered on his economic and philosophical appropriation of Hegel's dialectic, applying it to a socio-economic materialism "radicalized to an economic dependence" (Schmitt 2005: 43) rather than a narrow application of speculative idealism. In other words, and at the risk of over-simplification, Marx turned away from what he saw as Hegel's unworldly idealism and moved towards a this-worldly materialism. As the source for the Marxian material dialectic, Hegel is crucial for the revolutionary thrust of Marxian thought; "in the articulation of Hegel's system, human society remained the revolutionary ferment … Otherwise Marxism would be a philosophy of history like others, without revolutionary force and the power to form a party following" (Schmitt 1986: 64). Of course, as a brilliant thinker in his own right, Marx hardly just adopts Hegelian philosophy, but adapts it to his own ends. Marx's understanding of Hegel is complex and has spawned a vast secondary literature. The Marxian use of the dialectic has been particularly important for political appraisals of Hegel. Yet as Žižek (2012a: 250) remarks, "Marx's reference to Hegel's dialectics in his 'critique

[1] I am indebted to Iryna Vushko for discussions on Marx during a stay in Vienna. Her criticisms of my reading of Marx had a profound influence upon the direction this study took as it developed.

of political economy' is ambiguous, oscillating between taking it as a mystified expression of the logic of capital and taking it as a model for the revolutionary process of emancipation." This ambiguity has lent itself to one-sided readings of Marx's use of Hegel:

> Marx's criticism of the Hegelian Idea of the state as a mystical Idea-Subject can be made sense of simply as a critique of the rationalization of the existing state, and nothing more. In other words, Marx's critique essentially extends the criticisms that informed his early journalistic writing … and his charge of Hegel's 'logical, pantheistic mysticism' can be understood as a rhetorical, as well as misleading, way of arguing that by giving a rational philosophical form to the existing institutions of the state and civil society Hegel mystifies this reality. (Duquette 1989: 235)

On the other side one finds Kojève's conflation of Hegel's life and death struggle in the *Herr–Knecht* dialectic with a Marxian materialist dialectic of history as the "history of the working slave" (Kojève 1980: 20). Between these two sides of Marxian interpretation – total opposition and total identification – is the ambiguity Žižek describes. The Marxian legacy of Hegel scholarship is a field unto itself.

Marx was a keen and sophisticated observer of history. However, his friend and fellow revolutionary Engels had the greater effect on later understandings of Hegel's thoughts concerning the end of history. This is not a matter of primacy of influence; Marx's philosophy of history stands on its own, as a unique synthesis of economic and historical concerns. Marx's turn from history to economics is an important subject in its own right, but will not be detailed here. Of note, however, is "Marx's turn to economic studies during 1850, after the frustration of the hopes he had drawn from his interpretation of contemporary French history in the first three sections of *The Class Struggles in France*" (Krieger 1953: 383). Engels's discussion of Hegel's end of history takes place in the 1840s and is not a part of Marx's specific development, though of course they worked closely with each other during this time period. In point of fact, Marx's philosophy was far more influential than Engels's, taking in a wider intellectual scope and aiming at a broader philosophical audience, and Engels was aware of this and accepted it. Yet it is Engels that first and most forcefully broached the subject of an end of history in Hegel, and it is with Engels that a truly historical account of this theme in Hegel must begin. The most important text is certainly Engels's *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1886), though his anti-Schelling works of the early 1840s also play an important role, particularly "Schelling on Hegel" (1841) and "Schelling and Revelation" (1842). These two writings set the stage for the mature Engels to look back over his philosophical thought and to take serious measure of what he had understood of Hegel, what he had rejected,

and what he had kept. Friedrich Engels, rather than his more famous colleague and collaborator Karl Marx, is important to this study for a number of reasons. Marx enters explicitly into the end of history controversy via his latter-day disciple Kojève, and I detail this influence later. As for Engels, he clearly had more direct experience with Hegel's work than Nietzsche, and his criticism of Hegel is keener because of it. And finally, if there is anything resembling an end of history thesis in Hegel, Engels strikes the closest to it, when he insists that the systematic nature of Hegel's thought cries out for the sort of closure the end of history might provide. I think that Hegel himself heeded this cry to a certain extent, and that it bothered him that he could not heed it more. Yet the final result is the same; Hegel cannot end history with his philosophy, and he makes no claim to do so.

In his philosophy of spirit Hegel had sought to work out the existence of the absolute through logic, history, and 'scientific' means, that is, through rationalism (though a particular form of rationalism, best exemplified in Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik*). During his lifetime, of course, Hegel was the final arbiter of the meaning of his thought, but following his death in 1831, the "Hegelian school" split into two camps. One, the so-called Hegelian Left or the Young Hegelians, were students and professors in Berlin, represented by such thinkers as Engels, Feuerbach, David Strauss, Arnold Ruge, and Bruno Bauer. The Hegelian Left were critics of Prussian orthodoxy in religious and political realms, and read Hegel this way as well. They took Hegel to be representing a return to religion in the age of secular revolution, and aimed their attacks accordingly. The Old Hegelians, or the Hegelian Right, by and large represented the Prussian governmental or religious establishment, who came to read aspects of Hegelian philosophy as a reactionary affirmation of royal power and the Lutheran Church in Prussia. Friedrich Wilhelm IV, wanting to quash the growing influence of the liberal Hegelians, brought in Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854) to occupy the chair of philosophy in Berlin and to teach against his old friend Hegel. Schelling was a younger contemporary of Hegel, and, together with Friedrich Hölderlin, the three had been theology students, roommates, and friends in Tübingen in the late 1780s and early 1790s. Schelling, along with Fichte and Hegel, is one of the three central figures in the development of post-Kantian German Idealism, though for a time Schelling's work was all but forgotten. Schelling had published some early important works of a systematic nature which were deeply influential for Hegel and other post-Kantians, especially his *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), but his work became eclipsed by Hegel's philosophy during the latter's heyday.

By the time of Hegel's untimely death in 1831, Schelling had not published a major philosophical work since 1809's *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (itself now recognized as a high point in

German Idealism). Therefore it might seem all the more surprising that it was he who was called to Berlin in 1841 to take up Hegel's vacant chair in philosophy, in a government-sponsored attempt to rein in the effects of what much of the Prussian establishment considered to be Hegel's pantheism and revolutionary political philosophy. In fact, Schelling had deep reservations about what he saw as the negativity of Hegelian philosophy, and was all too happy to come to Berlin and make his case. Schelling was called to Berlin by the king to "stamp out the dragon seed of Hegelian pantheism in Berlin" (Hirschberger 1960 II:344). (It is telling that the same Hegel who, a generation later, was thought of by critics as the premier philosophical apologist for the Prussian status quo, was feared by that same royal and religious power in its own time as a left-wing radical bent on undermining theological orthodoxy and political propriety.) Schelling's arrival in Berlin also coincided with the publication in 1841 of Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*, a profound psychological and materialist attack on religion which greatly influenced Engels and others of the Hegelian Left. Even before the publication of his epochal 1841 study, Feuerbach was tying Hegel's philosophical emphasis on history to religion, insofar as both are supposed to be "predicates" of historical phenomena for Hegel, which "continue to exist as nothing more than shadows or moments, nothing more than homeopathic drops on the level of the *absolute*" (Feuerbach 1997 [1839]: 97). Yet in *Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach writes (1989 [1881]: 230), "The learned mob was so blind in its hatred of Hegel as not to perceive that his doctrine … does not in fact contradict religion – that it contradicts it only in the same way as, in general, a developed, consequent process of thought contradicts an undeveloped, inconsequent, but nevertheless radically identical conception." Partisanship ran high for Schelling's inaugural lectures at Berlin, and local newspapers carried competing accounts of the ongoing intellectual struggle between the philosophical reformers and the political old guard. Public fascination about Schelling's appointment to Berlin, and the attending social and political machinations, involved intellectual circles far beyond the great European capitals.

For example, the eminent American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson gave notice of Schelling's lectures in the journal of the New England Transcendentalists, *The Dial*, in July 1842. "From Berlin, the 'City of Criticism,' we learned, in the past months, that the king of Prussia was gathering around him a constellation of men of science," writes Emerson (1842: 136). He says that Schelling, "the greatest of all," is there because "the king is discontented with the Hegel influence," and so "he summons the great Schelling, now nearly seventy years old, to lecture on the Philosophy of Revelation." Emerson's descriptions of the lectures "from private accounts" is sensational, but nothing less than warranted by the circumstances: "The lecture room was crowded to suffocation; the pale professor, whose face resembles that of Socrates, was greeted with thunders

of acclamation, but he remained pale and unmoved as if in his own study, and apparently quite unconscious that he was making a new epoch in German history." Schelling, who was anything *but* unconscious of his role in the drama being played out in Berlin, gave his 1841–42 inaugural lectures to a veritable who's who of intellectual luminaries of the German-speaking world. Jakob Burckhardt, Leopold von Ranke, and members of the Prussian nobility were in attendance. University students Søren Kierkegaard (fresh from his wrenching break with Regine Olsen) and Mikhail Bakunin (fresh from Russia, where he had produced translations of Fichte and Hegel) came to hear Schelling speak. Also in attendance was a young and very partisan Hegelian named Friedrich Engels.

In these Berlin lectures, "Schelling tried to convince his audience that he was going to demonstrate to them that a new philosophical religion was required of 'us moderns,' and that he was going to deliver the rudiments of what that new philosophical religion would look like" (Pinkard 2002: 325). Schelling's notion of being "modern" is best explained by the distinction Lefebvre (2012: 1–2) makes between *modernism* and *modernity*. "By modernism we mean the consciousness which successive ages, periods and generations had of themselves; thus modernism consists of phenomena of consciousness, of triumphalist images and projections of self." Schelling's lectures in Berlin were by any measure exercises in modern*ism* under this definition. However, on Lefebvre's reading, they cannot be part of modernity, which is "the beginnings of a reflective process, a more-or-less advanced attempt at critique and auto-critique, a bid for knowledge." How is this at odds with Schelling's intention in coming to Berlin? Because the bid for knowledge Schelling attempts is the overturning of modern*ity* in the name of modern*ism*; that is, he attempts to shore up the breach knocked into the wall of German self-assured metaphysics by Hegel's post-Kantian philosophy (a generation later, Nietzsche will undertake the very same quest against Hegelianism, except in reverse: in that case, Hegelianism is modernism and Nietzsche is modernity). Žižek (2012a: 139) quips vis-à-vis Schelling that "true revolutionaries are always reflected conservatives," and while there is wisdom in such a claim, it cannot save Schelling's Berlin lectures. For Lefebvre, it is neither Schelling nor Nietzsche but Marx who first began the assault against Hegelianism's later stultified modernism (Lefebvre 2012: 169–70). In Berlin in 1840, however, Schelling represented not the metacritique of modernity but the retrenchment of a defensive modernism.

Schelling sought to place himself squarely within the intellectual lineage of Kant and Fichte ("my teachers") and claimed to be fulfilling the promise of their idealist beginnings, which Hegel had allegedly managed to overrationalize and throw off track by developing only an un-modern "negative" philosophy of logic and propositions. Schelling, by contrast, claimed to offer a "positive" philosophy founded on the givenness of Being which precedes

all thinking and resists attempts at (Hegelian) domestication (Schelling 1977: 138). Hegel's so-called negative philosophy had for Schelling removed both human freedom as well as the freedom necessary for the divine to be what it is, because it subordinated both mankind and divinity to the strictures of the science of logic. Human thought is free insofar as it is imitative of the divine freedom, and comes into its own in imagination. "Schelling's understanding of philosophical activity is intimately connected to the imagination," says Findler (2000: 50), because "for philosophy to take place, the free interpretive act must be undertaken. Hence, both freedom and necessity come together. Philosophy, as imitation, is a free act which takes place necessarily and reveals the evolution of self-consciousness." At issue here is the question of mediation and rationality. The negative is a rationalism which reduces the whole to a system of logic and necessity; this is Hegel. Complete mediation means logical transparency, and Schelling argues that Hegel's philosophy of mediation swamps the organic relation between the knower and the known. "The philosophy that Hegel presented is the negative driven beyond its own bounds [*die über ihre Schranken getreibene Negative*]: it does not exclude the positive, but subordinates its meaning to itself … This sort of philosophy … I have contested in my public lectures not only here but long before, and I will do so incessantly as long as there is need to do so" (Schelling *SW* 2:3:80–81). Further, Hegel forecloses the possibility of religious faith in his philosophy, because he offers the key to a false absolute knowledge in terms of *die Idee* and *der Begriff*. Schelling invokes Jacobi's old fear of nihilism and atheism in order to undermine Hegel's "logical dogmatism" which "Hegel wanted to ground in the merely abstract concept [*den bloßen abstrakten Begriff*], which is the most sickening because the most miserly form of dogmatism, whereas the dogmatism of the old metaphysics at least always had something grandiose about it" (*SW* 2:3:82).

At the same time, Schelling averred that what was needed was a new understanding of "revelation," and a new "Christian metaphysic," one sufficiently tied to life and belief. Hegel's religion was trapped within *Vorstellung*, representation, and was only an insufficient mode of knowledge, a "picture-thinking" inferior to philosophy. Like Hegel, Schelling tried to harmonize current religious and historical trends in a religio-historical philosophy. In his most famous published work, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Schelling links history and God through a notion which Hegel himself will stress, the notion of providence. Schelling writes, "it will become apparent that even what seemed to simply be the work of destiny or nature was already the beginning of a providence imperfectly revealing itself. When this period will begin, we are unable to tell. But whenever it comes into existence, God also will then *exist*" (Schelling 1978: 212). In this early work (Schelling was only twenty-five when he published it in 1800), Schelling has an idea of God as the *outcome*

of history, an idea shared in some sense with Hegel and developed in certain important ways in the latter's work. But Peter Hodgson is closer to Schelling than Hegel when he writes, "To recognize the honor and glory of God is not simply an epistemological act; it is also an ontological act of participation in the being and truth of God" (Hodgson 2012: 59). The idea of participation is deeply Hegelian; the idea of a final end is not. Were it so, Hegel would have "ended" history with the philosophical elucidation of the incarnation, which is the ultimate participation in the life of God, and the death of Christ which for Hegel is the transition to the life of (the Holy) spirit in the community. After all, according to Hegel it is the Christian doctrine of the incarnation that "first gave to human consciousness a completely free relationship with infinity and through this made possible a conceptual [*begreifende*] knowledge of spirit in its absolute infinity" (Hegel *Werke* 10 §377). The incarnation is the religio-philosophical bridge between the picture-thinking of religion and the conceptual (*begrifflich*) grasp of absolute spirit.

Schelling fears that Hegelianism reduces God to a human image, perhaps even a human projection *à la* Feuerbach:

> Will one find this other way to be better, in which only exclusively negative philosophy has access to an actual God? I mean the opinion that it is only via the development of the human spirit, through its advance into ever greater freedom, that is, basically through ever greater negativity alone can God be realized, that is, outside of human consciousness God does not exist in any sense – that man is actually God, and God is only man, which one afterwards even called the incarnation of God [*Menchwerdung Gottes*] (which is the same as saying the divinization of man [*Gottwerdung des Menschen*]). (Schelling *SW* 2:3:154)

Human spirit is not the foundation of divine revelation. Such knowledge cannot be mediated by Hegelian logic; to assume that it is, is tantamount to Spinozistic *atheism* or *acosmism*. The Schellingian absolute is the matrix within which the human spirit comes to know itself, and mediational human reason submits to unmediated divine reason "in order to find its own proper place" (*SW* 2:3:171). In a full-throated and important defense of Schellingian philosophy, Andrew Bowie maintains that Schelling is the precursor to contemporary postmodern philosophy, going so far as to argue that Schelling's absolute, "as what transitively constitutes all differences as same, is the same as the totality of differences" and that "this 'same,' [Derrida's] *différence*, plays the same role as the Absolute in Schelling" (Bowie 1993: 66–69). That is to say, according to Bowie, Schelling's absolute is the slippage of any totalizing schema of Being, the trace that remains when Hegelian logic bumps up against its limitations. Bowie then continues his Schelling/Derrida comparison: "Metaphysics for Derrida, then, is the attempt … to make the absent present, make nature spirit, make finite infinite, make mind matter, or matter mind. The classic representative of this attempt is, of course, Hegel, whose system arrives at a point

where negativity is revealed as what has to be overcome in order to finally arrive at the articulation of the Absolute" (Bowie 1993: 69). Whether or not Bowie is right about the Derrida–Schelling connection, this is precisely the argument Schelling makes against Hegel in his Berlin lectures. Hegelian philosophy moves too far in the direction of rational dissection and subordinates the free spirit of divine reason to the dry categories of systematic logic. In short, Hegel's work is politically suspect, religiously bankrupt, and epistemologically impotent.

What did Schelling's anticipated philosophy of revelation reveal to the many gathered in Berlin to hear the word of the renowned old scholar, who had known personally nearly every important German thinker from the revolutionary age to his own time? Rightly or wrongly, to many of those in Schelling's audience, in the place of "dangerous" Hegelian speculation Schelling offered up only a blend of Christian rationalist metaphysics and pro-monarchial reassurance which, while no doubt pleasing the Prussian authorities, did little to convince his hearers that a new, more modern epoch in German history had arrived. In fact, Schelling's lectures had nothing at all to say to the historical *Zeitgeist*. According to Carl Schmitt (1986: 63–64) this was because "In Schelling ('in history, it is not the individual who acts, but rather the species'), the superindividual reality was still essentially defined by considerations based on the philosophy of nature. It was not historically oriented." Engels and others gravitated to Hegel because "Hegel was the first to bring the two realities into one synthesis, and thereby to consistently take the step that inevitably dethroned the God of traditional metaphysics." Though these lectures were influential in reframing Schelling's status as a serious philosopher, they hardly lived up to their expectations, and he never published them (a transcript was later published by Heinrich Paulus against Schelling's wishes; when the courts refused to rule against Paulus, Schelling resigned his chair in outrage, ending his tenure in Berlin). The lectures did, however, serve to galvanize many of the young Hegelian radicals such as Marx and Engels who were convinced that while the religious aspects of German Idealism were beyond salvaging, the basic trajectory of Hegel's philosophy was in its essence correct. More specifically, Engels himself felt that Hegel's intellectual legacy had to be defended against Schelling's attacks, and he undertook to do this in a series of trenchant anti-Schelling tracts published in 1841–42. The first two of these, "Schelling über Hegel" (1841) and "Schelling und die Offenbarung" (1842), allow a glimpse into the thought of Engels the partisan Hegelian apologist who will later come to criticize and even transcend Hegel in his own important way.[2] However,

[2] I am passing over the last of these anti-Schelling polemics, *Schelling, der Philosoph in Christo* (1842), in the interest of brevity. This is a fascinating piece in its own right, however, containing as it does several provocative and satirical biblical exegeses at Schelling's expense.

what was of value to Engels in Hegel's thought in the early 1840s sheds light on how Engels came to understand Hegel's historicism, and specifically how Engels read Hegel's philosophy in terms of an end to history.

3.2 Engels and the Schellingian critique of Hegel

"Schelling über Hegel," published by Engels in the December 1841 *Telegraph für Deutschland* (under the pseudonym "Friedrich Oswald," as was typical of the times), is something of a fiery gauntlet thrown down by the young Engels in defense of Hegel and his legacy, and while it is short on nuanced argument, it is long on passionate defense. In fact, it is intended to be less a well-argued bit of philosophy than a searing broadside against Schelling and those hangers-on who follow him merely because he attacks Hegel. The piece begins with a lighthearted and somewhat *ad hominem* portrayal of Schelling during his lectures in Berlin (Engels notes Schelling's Swabian dialect, which marked him as something of a provincial in urbane Berlin, though Hegel himself would have spoken with this same dialect). "Schelling on Hegel" quickly moves into polemic, however, as Engels quotes a long passage from the lectures wherein Schelling claims that Hegel, during their collaboration in the early 1800s, "having found the great material already mastered," concerned himself only with Schelling's method, leaving the meat of the thinking to his younger, better-known associate (Engels *MEWEr* 2:165). According to Engels, Schelling's claim amounts to this: "Hegel actually had no system whatsoever of his own, but eked out a miserable existence with the leavings of my thought." Understandably, Engels claims that Schelling's "death sentence on Hegel's system" is a series of gross misrepresentations, bordering on "libels [*Schmähungen*], let Schelling say what he will" (*MEWEr* 2:167). Schelling has no claim as the successor of Hegel as far as Engels is concerned, because Engels believes Schelling has it backwards. For Engels, it is not the meat of the Schellingian system, but the Hegelian bones which hold it up, that endure; that is, what is valuable in Hegel, and remains valuable even after Engels moves from Hegel's orbit more fully into Marx's, remains the dialectic, that method with which Hegel ostensibly had to "content himself" after Schelling moved on to better and more important matters.

Engels accuses Schelling of simultaneously claiming credit for and then dismissing out of hand the whole of antecedent nineteenth-century German philosophy out of petty jealousy (Engels mockingly calls it "that well-known, pale-yellow passion") at Hegel's fame and influence. What emerges from Engels's "Schelling on Hegel" is a rallying cry for the young and enlightened to rise up and defy the likes of Schelling, who wish to submerge the liberative philosophy of Hegel under their own tired, repressive, and derivative thought. Engels concludes this opening polemic by declaring,

> It will be our business to follow the course of [Hegel's] thinking and to shield the great man's grave from abuse. We are not afraid to fight … Hence we shall rise confidently against the new enemy; in the end, one will be found among us who will prove that the sword of enthusiasm is just as good as the sword of genius. Let Schelling see whether he can muster a school. Many only join him now because like him they are opposed to Hegel and accept with gratitude anybody who attacks him … Whether he will find any other adherents remains to be seen. I do not yet believe so, although some of his hearers are making progress and have already got as far as indifference. (*MEWEr* 2:173)

As an announcement and incitement to impassioned and revolutionary thinking and organizing, Engels's "Schelling on Hegel" was less a work of philosophy and more a challenge to philosophy. Could thought rise above the stultifying effects of Schellingian reaction and defend the liberty Hegelian thought had introduced? The twenty-one-year-old Engels was certain that it could.

The next work, "Schelling and Revelation," is a more intellectually substantial text, though not lacking in Engels's gifts for rhetoric or polemic. Engels published it anonymously in Leipzig in early 1842, subtitling it "Critique of the Latest Attempt of Reaction against the Free Philosophy" – the free philosophy in question being Hegel's, as well as that of the Young Hegelians as the legitimate bearers of the Hegelian mantle (the Berlin Hegelians had formed a society amongst themselves known as *die Freien*, "the Free," and saw their development of Hegelian thought as a continuation of Hegel's "free philosophy"). The work begins where "Schelling on Hegel" left off, announcing that despite Schelling's best efforts Hegel and Hegelianism had failed to disappear, and if anything its "influence on the nation, as proved if only by the increased rage and activity of its opponents, is rapidly growing, and Schelling has left almost all his hearers dissatisfied" (Engels *MEWEr* 2:174). While Engels continues his attack on Schelling, he is not an uncritical disciple of Hegel's in this work; he feels free to criticize Hegel where he believes it will strengthen his overall point, namely, that Hegel's thought represented the only legitimate way forward for German thought. In particular, Engels here makes clear his own relationship to Hegel's work – a relationship that will remain more or less constant throughout Engels's career – by drawing an important distinction between Hegel's methods and his conclusions. Engels is explicit in his belief that Hegelian philosophy would have benefitted from a less "positive" and too-optimistic outlook had it adhered more closely to the very thing which Schelling opposes, namely "pure thought" (*MEWEr* 2:176). "All inconsistencies and contradictions in Hegel can be reduced to that," insists Engels. He then goes on to state his own hermeneutic for reading Hegel, one followed also by Marx: "Everything which in the philosophy of religion appears too orthodox, and in the philosophy of law too pseudo-historical, is to be understood from this point of view. The principles are throughout independent and

free-minded, the conclusions – no one denies it – sometimes cautious, even illiberal" (*MEWEr* 2:176). That is, Engels wishes to preserve Hegel's principles and method, while remaining cautious about the use to which Hegel put them. The heart of Hegelian thought, its dialectical method, is liberal, even if the application has been all too happy to embrace the royal and religious powers that be.

As a thoughtful philosopher in his own right Engels has the wherewithal to use Hegel to his own ends rather than ape Left Hegelian orthodoxy. Engels wishes to offer a critique of Schelling which is true to Hegel, and at the same time demonstrate that *his* reading of Hegel, and the inheritance of the Left Hegelians, is the more historically and politically potent of the two. Engels attempts to de-emphasize the religious and speculative thrust of Hegelian philosophy in favor of its rational and historical aspects. As an interpretive move, this runs the risk of removing what is most important in Hegel's philosophy, namely its quasi-theological bent (I am in complete agreement with Hook's (1994: 17) statement that "the spirit of the Hegelian philosophy was primarily religious and its systematic logic a rational theology" – which is not a claim for any particular orthodoxy in Hegelian religious philosophy). On the other hand, in Engels's defense, while this is an inadequate accounting of Hegel, it is hardly intellectually dishonest; Hegel's body of work is such that it is a never-ending supply of ready-made justifications for almost any particular position, and greater thinkers than Engels have happily indulged over the years. Nevertheless, the greater part of "Schelling and Revelation" is a sustained attack on Schellingian "sentimental mysticism and gnostic fantasy"(*MEWEr* 2:181) in the vein of Hegel's own anti-Romantic polemics (and specifically anti-Schelling statements as well, such as Hegel's infamous scorn for Schellingian *Identitätsphilosophie* as a "night in which all cows are black," Hegel *Werke* 3:22). Engels stresses what he sees as the necessity inherent in the Hegelian system, based particularly on the development and clarity of Hegel's *Logic*. That Schelling is unable to understand this logic, says Engels, explains why he reduces the dialectic down to a shallow sensationalism of thought, wherein self-consciousness inclines first to being, then to non-being, and finally to a hybrid absolute possibility devoid of any actuality at all.

Engels contrasts this with "the powerful [Hegelian] dialectic, that motive force which constantly drives the individual thought categories … to ever new development and rebirth until they arise from the grave of negation for the last time as absolute idea" (Engels *MEWEr* 2:186). He insists that if one grants the Hegelian categories being, essence, etc. in the *Logic* (and Schelling claims to do so), then it is not enough to see the categories as models – they are then of necessity "generating forces" which create, destroy, and remake all things in their own image, and that "this means nothing else than that they deduce the thought-content of the world and its necessary consequence from the existence

of *reason*" (*MEWEr* 2:190), the very reason which Schelling sees as sterile, positive, and inhibiting. In other words, for Engels (and for a great many other Hegelians), there is a coherent necessity about Hegel's work that cannot be jettisoned without doing irreparable harm to the system as a whole. Schelling would have been better off in Engels's eyes following through with his royal commission and attempting to jettison Hegelianism in its entirety. Instead, according to Engels Schelling attempted to demote Hegel, to make Hegel his precursor, in the process betraying (at least to Engels) that he fundamentally misunderstood Hegel's thought.

"Schelling and Revelation" is Engels's contribution to the robust critique of Christianity that dominated the German philosophical left in the 1840s, of which Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* is but the most obvious and well-known example. Even Hegel falls under Engels's censure for his attempt at reconciling Christianity and philosophy, but Engels makes it clear that Hegel's project is not Schelling's. "The irreconcilability of philosophy and Christianity has gone so far that Schelling falls into an even worse contradiction than does Hegel," Engels writes. "The latter at least had a philosophy, even if the outcome was only an apparent Christianity; by contrast, what Schelling produces is neither Christianity nor philosophy" (*MEWEr* 2:217). Hegel can be forgiven for trying to fit his thought around inherited norms, for after all, it was Hegel who taught that "Every philosophy is the philosophy of its own day … and thus it can only find satisfaction for the interests belonging to its own particular time" (Hegel *Werke* 18:65). As far as Engels was concerned, however, Schelling had rejected logical necessity and thereby freedom, for Schelling confuses Hegelian freedom (*Freiheit*) and arbitrariness (*Willkür*) (Engels *MEWEr* 2:217). Schelling's critique of Hegel ends up pleasing no one; neither the intellectual left which wanted to see some robust Hegelian form of atheism hold sway, nor the Prussian old guard who wished to see Schelling undo Hegelianism with all the philosophical exactness with which it had been originally built up. Schelling in the 1840s was simply not up to the job; for his young listeners, he merely reinscribes a philosophical Christianity founded upon received ideas about the guiding hand of Providence and the role this played in the establishment of (Prussian) religio-political institutions. But the Hegelian Left would have none of this. For them, Hegel's philosophy obviated the need for the deity entirely. "The Hegelian dialectic … is nothing but the consciousness of humanity in pure thinking, the consciousness of the universal, Hegel's consciousness of God," writes Engels. "Where, as with Hegel, everything produces itself, a divine personality is superfluous" (Engels *MEWEr* 2:217). Spirit knows itself not merely *in* itself, which is logic, and not only *for* itself, which is nature, but fully in and for itself in a "comprehensive knowing" (Hegel *Werke* 3:582) which, for Engels, brings all meaningful God-talk to an end, the absolute now being vested solely in human knowing, human endeavor,

and human history. By reading Hegel's philosophy as a *critique* of religion (which it certainly is), though as little more, Engels is able to muster Hegelian thought to the service of the revolutionary movements of mid-century Europe, movements in which Engels, and Marx, the "Red Forty-Eighters" (Hammon 1972), intended to play a crucial role.

3.3 The March Revolution and the break with the Hegelian Left

When Louis-Philippe abdicated the French throne in February 1848, many across Europe thought the time for more active revolution was at hand. The end of the July Monarchy was as much the result of revolutionary tension as its catalyst, but beyond the borders of France, it had immense suggestive power. Lamartine's declaration of the Second Republic from the balcony of the Hôtel de Ville in Paris "fell like a bomb amid the states and kingdoms of the Continent," according to the American *chargé d'affaires* in Vienna, "and, like reluctant debtors threatened with legal terrors, the various monarchs hastened to pay their subjects the constitutions which they owed them" (Rapport 2008: 57). In 1840, there had been widespread fear that France would invade the Rheinprovinz, increasing anti-French sentiment and inflaming nationalism in the principalities and states of the German Confederation. Cholera epidemics, such as the one that may have claimed Hegel's life in 1831, harvest failures, and unprecedented population growth had increased the suffering of the Prussian people. Such social and economic troubles in the German-speaking world, and similar problems in areas such as the Italian city states, the Grand Duchy of Poland, and the Habsburg lands, conspired to make the abdication of the French monarch the symbolic catalyst which caused revolutionary sentiment to sweep the lands of Europe. A young revolutionary named Richard Wagner was caught up in the uprisings in Dresden and had to flee for his life. Wagner writes in his autobiography about his time in Dresden during the riots. In order to survey the street fighting, he claims to have mounted a church tower. There, Wagner writes,

> I made the acquaintance of a schoolmaster named Berthold … I lost myself in an earnest philosophical discussion with him which extended to the widest spheres of religion … The Prussian sharpshooters were posted on the distant spires of the Frauenkirche, and had chosen the height occupied by us as their target … Thus I spent one of the most extraordinary nights of my life, taking turns with Berthold to keep watch and sleep, close beneath the great bell with its terrible groaning clang, and with the accompaniment of the continuous rattle of the Prussian shot as it beat against the tower walls. (Wagner 1963: 466–67)

In Prussia, this sentiment took tangible form as protests against Friedrich Wilhelm IV in Berlin, demanding press freedoms, parliamentary elections, and a written constitution. Cowed by public pressure, and unable to count on

his nobles to hold the line in their own lands, the King lent his support to a National Assembly, convened in Frankfurt in May 1848 to outline steps needed for nothing less than German unification. Throughout 1848 deliberation at the Frankfurt Parliament continued, but when the results of the constitutional debate were presented in April 1849, Friedrich Wilhelm refused the outcome – a *Kleindeutschland* without Austria (which was unable to come to terms with Prussia over Schleswig-Holstein) – and the parliament broke down and eventually disbanded. This turn of events was not a complete surprise; strong popular support for the monarchy, and the fact that the Frankfurt Parliament never had meaningful legal power over the larger German Confederation, combined to ensure that any major legislative revolution in Frankfurt was doomed at the outset. In addition, the Frankfurt Parliament had no direct control of any soldiers, though various militias formed on both sides of the conflict, adding to the royal forces already assembled to ensure the peace. Tensions continued to run high. Marx and Engels had been among those who called for armed insurrection, writing inflammatory articles in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* and visiting the representatives at the National Assembly in person to persuade them to call out the local militias and march on Frankfurt (Meyer 1934 I:343; Henderson 1976 I:161), but to no avail. Marx was deported and fled to Paris, and eventually London. Engels remained behind, joining with Baden insurgents in combat against Prussian troops in the small town of Willich (Mayer 1934 I:348–49). Engels then escaped over the border to Switzerland, making his way into exile in England in November 1849, where he lived and wrote until his death in 1895.

One of the greatest disappointments of the March Revolution for Engels was the lack of support evidenced in the petty bourgeoisie for substantial change. Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann explains that one of the reasons the middle class for the most part failed to join in with the revolutionary uproar in Germany was that the conflict was initially aimed at feudal holdovers who oppressed the rural peasantry, who were still tied to the land, but left the economically mobile and increasingly urban middle classes mostly alone and thus intact. That is, using traditional Marxist vocabulary, the March Revolution was initially a matter between the proletariat (and perhaps even the *Lumpenproletariat*), the *haute bourgeoisie*, and the nobility, but without the backing of the petty bourgeoisie, who, while business owners, were also workers trapped in the interstices of capitalist systems and could be expected to support revolution. In fact, the petty bourgeoisie were the targets of the revolutionary agitators. However, they "neglected the large problems with which the German peasantry were faced, and were therefore surprised when they heard that it was the countryside which saw the first wave of revolution in Germany," rather than the industrialized urban centers. Hoping for a revolt among the intelligentsia and skilled laborers, what the revolutionaries in Germany got instead was an uprising of

the oppressed and thinly educated masses. "The violent protest movement was directed mainly against feudal burdens, i.e. fees and duties. Issues of poverty and social conflicts did not figure prominently" (Pogge von Strandmann 2002: 105). It was only in the second wave of the revolution that the unrest spread to most other strata of society. But by then the forces of reaction had regained control of the cities and the internal tensions between the various revolutionary groups had fatally fractured the tenuous coalitions.

As must have been expected, most of the petty bourgeoisie had little appetite for violent struggle, and Engels saw that Prussian mid-level industrialists and large farmers were loath to risk having their trading advantages wrecked, even in the name of their own political freedom. This is ironic, since the revolutionary uprisings in Germany were grounded more in the long-term interests of the petty bourgeoisie, with promises of increased enfranchisement and extended trade influence, than of the proletariat whose plight was invoked to fan the flames of insurrection. Nevertheless, made up of shopkeepers, professionals, small business owners, and such, these urban *Kleinbürgerei* seemed more interested in securing their own short-term (and from Marx and Engels's point of view, short-sighted) economic power against an encroaching monarchy than in truly overthrowing the existing system. From the left's perspective, the case for revolution had not been adequately made; the struggles of the working classes were still of little consequence to the ruling order, and too internalized in the life experiences of the workers themselves. In a letter to Marx dated 3 December 1851, Engels wrote of his disgust over the weak course of revolutionary sentiment in France, which had led to the dissolution of the National Assembly in a *coup d'état* staged by president Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte's faction:

> It's enough to make one despair … *Mais le peuple, le peuple! – Le peuple se fiche pas mal de toute cette boutique* [But the people, the people! … The people couldn't care less about this business], are happy as children over the franchise accorded to them and which, indeed, they will probably make use of like children. What can result from these ridiculous elections a week from Sunday, if in fact it ever comes to that? … How much longer the World Spirit, clearly much incensed at mankind, is going to continue this farce, whether within the year we shall see Consulate, Empire, Restoration and all pass by before our eyes, whether, too, the Napoleonic dynasty must first be thrashed in the streets of Paris before it is deemed impossible in France, the devil only knows. But it strikes me that things are taking a remarkably lunatic turn and that the *crapauds* ["frogs"] are heading for an astonishing humiliation. (Engels *MECW* 38:503)

Engels's frustrations proved to be oracular when, exactly one year later in December 1852, the Second Republic was declared ended and Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte was restored to the throne as Napoleon III. The seeming failure of the 1848 uprisings in German lands indicated to many that the groundwork for

a true socialist revolution had yet to be laid. Marx and Engels had contributed to such a groundwork with *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, published under commission of the German Communist League one month before the March Revolution of 1848, but the radical conception of economic and political *communism* as opposed to a more mainstream and utilitarian *socialism* had not had time to work its way into the consciousness of the age. According to Jones (1991: 37), "Writing much later, Engels observed that it would have been impossible to write a 'Socialist Manifesto,' since socialism was the theory of respectable middle-class doctrinaires. The word 'communism,' however, was far from respectable, as it carried connotations of insurrection and militancy." Later, in *Kapital* and other works, both men advocated for and developed ways of understanding philosophy, politics, and economics through the lenses of communism and historicism, grounded in what Marx termed the "materialist conception of history."

Another great disappointment to both Engels and Marx was the philosophical establishment's continued use (and misuse) of Hegelian thought, particularly the writings of Edgar and Bruno Bauer, whom Marx and Engels lampooned in their 1844 book *The Holy Family*. According to Luft (2006: 145), Edgar Bauer "argued that Christianity and Islam were each in their own time total revolutions that violently overthrew the previously prevailing cultures. He preached that now was the time for a new total revolution of humanity to overthrow in an equally or even more violent way both of these oppressive, mind-numbing religious cultures." Marx would have none of this violent idealistic stupidity; the time for violent overthrow would indeed come, but it would come through a materialist, historical progressive dialectic and not through a new orgy of religious anti-religion. As for anarchy as a viable political plan, Engels was clear:

> Bakunin maintains that it is the state which has created capital, that the capitalist has his capital *only by favour of the state*. As, therefore, the state is the chief evil, it is above all the state which must be done away with and then capitalism will go to hell of itself. We, on the contrary say: do away with capital, the appropriation of the whole means of production in the hands of the few, and the state will fall away of itself. The difference is an essential one … Now as, according to Bakunin, the International is not to be formed for political struggle but in order that it may at once replace the old state organisation as soon as social liquidation takes place, it follows that it must come as near as possible to the Bakunist ideal of the society of the future. In this society there will above all be no authority, for authority = state = an absolute evil. (How these people propose to run a factory, work a railway or steer a ship without having in the last resort one deciding will, without a unified direction, they do not indeed tell us.) (Engels *MECW* 44:306–8)

As Lukács (1972: xxxiv) points out, "Marx's criticism was that such thinkers believed subjectively that they were making an advance on Hegel, while objectively they simply represented a revival of Fichte's subjective idealism."

Yet as Engels and Marx worked on spreading the ideals of their revolutionary thought through writing and speeches, they both drifted farther and farther from the conclusions of Hegelian thought (witness Marx's famous claim to have turned Hegel "right side up," from a spiritual dialectic to a material one – a move which Hook [1994: 85–86] says is Marx's return to a more Aristotelian naturalism). For his own part, Engels remained committed to what he believed was the core idea of Hegelian thought, namely the method of Hegel's historical dialectic, however distorted it had become in its effects. A discussion between Marx and Engels on Hegel's method as opposed to his outcomes can be found in one of Marx's letters to Engels dated 16 January 1858:

> I am, by the way, discovering some nice arguments. *E.g*. I have completely demolished the theory of profit as hitherto propounded. What was of great use to me as regards method of treatment was Hegel's *Logic* at which I had taken another look by mere accident … If ever the time comes when such work is again possible, I should very much like to write two or three sheets making accessible to the common reader the rational aspect of the method which Hegel not only discovered but also mystified. (Engels *MECW* 49:313)

A glimpse into one of Engels's later letters shows him preoccupied with the subject of Hegel's method as opposed to his outcomes, or what Engels calls the "system," some three decades later. In this letter, dated 1 July 1891, Engels is commenting on Paul Barth's 1891 work *Die Geschichtsphilosophie Hegels und der Hegelianer bis auf Marx und Hartmann*. Engels's comments are words to be heeded by any Hegel interpreter:

> I am very much disappointed with Barth's book. I had expected something rather less shallow and slap-dash. A man who judges every philosopher not by the enduring and progressive part of his activity but by what is necessarily transitory and reactionary – by the system – would have done better to remain silent … How high old Hegel stands above this alleged critic of his! And then to imagine he is criticising Hegel because here and there he gets on the track of one of the false connections by means of which Hegel, like every other systematiser, has to get his system neatly constructed! … I could show him some more tricks very different from that if it was worth the trouble. The man is what we call on the Rhine a *Korinthenscheisser* – he turns everything into petty trash – and until he has got rid of this habit, he will, to use Hegel's language, "come from nothing through nothing to nothing". (Engels *MEC* 49:313)

For the rest of his life, Engels remained one of the staunchest supporters of Hegel's philosophy as he understood it, especially what he saw as the lasting contribution Hegel had made to getting thought back on a firm temporal footing, and separating it from the Schellingian Idealism (read: religious philosophy) which obfuscated what ought to be clear and precise. Near the end of his life, Engels sought to come to terms with the legacy of history and philosophy in his and Marx's post-1848 works, especially their debts to Hegel and

to Feuerbach. This settling of accounts resulted in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, Engels's clearest and most compelling philosophical vision, published in February 1888.

3.4 Engels and the end of history

Even before the March Revolution, Marx and Engels had separated from the Young Hegelians over the issue of religion. In *The German Ideology* (1845), Marx had noted that the philosophical disputes between Hegel's intellectual heirs were all red herrings insofar as they centered on the role of religion in public life. Marx and Engels were convinced that this was the wrong concern. Hegel's Idealism (which Marx rejected), if not his method (which Marx accepted but modified for his own purposes), was ineluctably religious – this aspect of Hegel's thought could not be accommodated, it had to be jettisoned as mere trappings which did no justice to the revolutionary progressivism of the dialectic. Because the Old Hegelians embraced a particularly conservative version of Hegel's religious vision, and wedded Hegelian thought to the royal and religious establishment in Prussia, the Young or Left Hegelians assumed that the source of the state's power was traditional Prussian Lutheranism (or even worse, Catholicism in southern German lands). For both Marx and Engels, however, religion was ultimately the wrong target for a revolutionary movement. For example, Marx believed that the fatal flaw in Feuerbach's work on Christianity was his assumption that religion was the be-all and end-all of German bogeymen. Marx and Engels had decided by 1845 that economic capital, not religion, was the real source of the establishment's power, and that consequently only a materialist conception of history dealing with class struggle and the ownership of capital and production could clearly delineate the issues at stake in history. Religion, while false, was thus a blind alley for true revolutionary activity.

Religion in Feuerbach's sociological reduction is mere *religare*, a system which binds people together with shared commitments, but only people in the abstract. Compare the criticisms of religion in Bauer and Feuerbach: "Where Bauer regarded humanity's subjection to religious illusions as totally debasing, Feuerbach viewed religious feeling as alienated human species-being. Whereas Bauer sought to dissolve religious illusion, Feuerbach sought to return the projections of religion to their source in humanity … and thereby to transform religious devotion into humanist devotion" (Breckman 2006: 80). Though more nuanced than Bauer or Stirner, Feuerbach clearly saw religion as the problem to be overcome. However, Feuerbach offered only an idealist solution, and such idealism is repugnant both to Engels's historicist understanding of Hegel and his own Marxian materialist project. So "the cult of abstract man … had to be

replaced by the science of real men and their historical development," i.e. with the Marx of *die Heilige Familie.* And because Left Hegelians like Bruno Bauer and Max Stirner limited their most potent criticisms to religious conceptions, they were, "in spite of their allegedly 'world-shattering' statements, the most staunch of conservatives" (Engels *MEW* 3:20) and hardly fit to bear the revolutionary mantle. The radical political break with the Young Hegelians, who with their preoccupation with religion and its flaws were no longer radical enough for Marx and Engels, was decisive for the future development of German philosophy, insofar as it established a *political* rather than a strictly *religious* basis for criticizing the status quo. Forty years later, Engels continued and elaborated this criticism of the Left Hegelians in his 1888 work on Feuerbach, extending it in some limited sense to Hegel as well.

At stake in Engels's reassessment of Hegel in the *Feuerbach* essay is his sense that Hegel somehow failed to carry his own philosophy to its logical ends. In particular, Engels is concerned with Hegel's philosophy of history and its claim to stand as a culmination of historical thought up to its time. Engels's position, that Hegelian philosophy did not square with what Hegel *should* have seen as reality, served as the basis for his claim that Hegel, despite his best intentions and the clear direction of his own philosophy, felt compelled to claim that history ended in his own time. This claim, which Nietzsche had advanced in 1874 in the second of his *Untimely Meditations*, makes its first appearance in Engels with the 1888 work on Feuerbach. Like Nietzsche, Engels believes that an end of history is necessary in Hegel's understanding of his own system (what Engels called in the letter previously cited "the track of one of the false connections by means of which Hegel … has to get his system neatly constructed"). Unlike Nietzsche, Engels wants to argue against this trend in Hegel, seeking to preserve the revolutionary quality of the dialectic while denying the putative inevitability of Hegel's envisioned end. However, a close look at Engels's statements about Hegel and the end of history shows that, like Nietzsche, Engels relies on a selective reading of Hegel and a rather narrow interpretation of the demands of the Hegelian system. Nietzsche said that Hegel "ought to have" asserted the superfluity of all which came after him, though he does not do so (Nietzsche *KGW* 3:1:304). Engels goes farther and says that Hegel *does*, in fact, envision his philosophy of history as an end, though Engels says this for the same reason that Nietzsche does, namely, that the full-fledged system demands such closure. Engels, however, desires another type of closure – another end to history, as it were – the closure of the historical process brought about by the communist "new world outlook," of which he and Marx had supplied the first "brilliant germ [*der geniale Keim der neuen Weltanschauung*]" (Engels *MEW* 21:264). Hegel cannot have ended history; that honor rightly belongs to Marx, and to Engels.

Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy deals with much more than simply Hegel, though Engels claims that the work is intended as "a short, coherent account of our [i.e. Engels and Marx's] relation to the Hegelian philosophy … [and] how we separated from it" (*MEW* 21:263). The work is divided into four sections, the first of which is dedicated to Hegel (the remaining sections are "Materialism," "Feuerbach," and "Marx," respectively). After some preparatory remarks, Engels begins to discuss the philosophical revolution of the nineteenth century, with Hegelian thought as the "termination system of its whole development" which was "raised, so to speak, to the rank of royal Prussian state philosophy" (265). Engels is scornful of such readings of Hegelian thought, naturally, pointing out that both the liberals and the conservatives laid claim to the inheritance of Hegel's philosophy without either side truly understanding Hegel's meaning. He illustrates this by a masterful reading of Hegel's oft-quoted dictum from the Introduction to *Philosophy of Right*, "what is rational, is actual; what is actual, is rational" (Hegel *Werke* 7:24). Engels notes that governments that take this proposition as an affirmation of the status quo have it all wrong – they commit the classic is–ought fallacy, forgetting, as Engels puts it, "according to Hegel certainly not everything which exists is also real, without further qualification" (Engels *MEW* 21:266). "To exist" and "to be real" are manifestly not the same thing in Hegelian philosophy. *Actuality* is a technical term in Hegelian thought, and to *be* is not to automatically be *actual*. Hegel himself explains this dictum somewhat in his 1830 *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*: "a contingent existence does not deserve to be called actual in the emphatic sense of the word – the contingent exists in no greater sense than does that which is *possible*; it could just as well *not exist*, as exist" (Hegel *Werke* 8 §6). In other words, Hegel in no sense places the imprimatur upon any existing contingent state of affairs, for actuality and contingency cannot inhere in the same event. For Hegel, contingency and actuality mutually exclude one another at the absolute level. Rather, as Engels correctly points out, for Hegel actuality is inextricably tied up with *necessity*. That which is necessary is actual, and that according to very narrow parameters; that which is contingent is only potentially actual.[3] This may be a subtle point, but it makes all the difference in reading Hegel's philosophy of history – indeed, in reading any portion of Hegel's philosophical output.

[3] Even Nietzsche recognized the potential for abuse in Hegel's real/rational proposition: "[Hegel's] grandiose project has been misused by the existing powers (the state, etc.) as if it sanctioned the rationality of whoever happened to be ruling" (*Will to Power* §416). In no sense does "*Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig*" sanction any particular instantiation of state power, as Nietzsche well knew, which makes it all the more evident that his qualms about Hegel, while very real, were best aimed at Hegel's later interpreters, the "cultural philistines" who believed in the inevitability of Germanic superiority.

While Engels defends Hegel's real/rational proposition against appropriation by any particular governmental system, he also asserts that Hegel forgot one of the most important lessons of the proposition: "In accordance with all the rules of Hegelian thinking, the dictum of the rationality of everything which is real resolves itself into the other proposition: All that exists deserves to perish [*Alles was besteht, ist wert, daß es zugrunde geht*]" (Engels *MEW* 21:267). This is curious, because the notion that the dialectic is ongoing and never static is of course basic to Hegelian thought; it lies at the heart of Hegel's understanding of history, and Hegel embraced it in his exposition of the philosophy of Heraclitus (*πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μέναι*, Plato, *Cratylus* 402a; Gadamer 1976: 27 holds that Plato is more important than Aristotle or Heraclitus here). In fact, Hegel claims in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, "Here we see land; there is no proposition in Heraclitus that I have not assimilated into my *Logic*" (Hegel *Werke* 18:320). Hegel explains Heraclitus in terms which parallel the development of spirit from the *Phenomenology*, saying that "the universal principle is best characterized as becoming, which is the truth of being; since all is and is not, Heraclitus thus said that everything is becoming." Importantly, Hegel adds, "Not only does origination belong to it, *but passing away as well*; both are not independent, but identical" (*Werke* 18:324, emphasis added). Of course, Engels does not deny that this trend towards impermanence, flux, and becoming is present in Hegel. To the contrary, Engels says that "therein lay the true meaning and the revolutionary nature of the Hegelian philosophy … that it once and for all dealt the death blow to the finality of all products of human thought and deed" (Engels *MEW* 21:267). Engels recognized a powerful and enduring aspect of Hegel's thought, its ability to assert the importance of any given historical or philosophical development while at the same time pointing out its inevitable undoing once it had served whatever purpose it might have had. With Hegel's philosophy, "Truth now lay in the process of cognition itself," and thus no historical horizon could ever serve as the final destination for thought (cf. Heidegger *GA* 11:55: "for Hegel, the matter of thinking is itself historical – but historical in the sense of occurrence [*Geschehens*]. The process-character of thinking is determined by the dialectic of being. The matter of thinking is being, as thought thinking itself, according to Hegel.") Engels's assessment of Hegel's dialectic is concise and revealing, because he both got Hegel so right, and yet fails to see the limits of his own reading. In Hegel's dialectical philosophy, "nothing is final, absolute, or sacred; it reveals the transitory nature of all things and in all things, and nothing can stand before it save the uninterrupted process [*ununterbrochene Prozeß*] of becoming and dissolution, the unending ascendancy from the lower to the higher, whose mere reflection in the thinking brain it is" (*MEW* 21:267–68).

That both Hegel and Engels viewed the dialectic in and of itself as the end point of philosophical thought is little to be doubted; at the very least, both

thinkers – and perhaps all strict Hegelians are doomed to this failing in one way or another – fell victim to the sort of intellectual Spencerian Darwinism which Jacques Barzun (1958: 321–22) accurately called the "triumph of the absolute." It is this failing which critics of Hegel often cite when they otherwise mistake Hegelian process for Hegelian progress. What remains to be said, however, is why Engels reads the triumph of the dialectic as the end of history. In part, it is because Engels believed that Hegel was unwilling to extend the notion of dissolution to his own thought, or at least to the place it enjoyed in history. Also, Engels conflates Hegel's ideas of history and of philosophy, so that when one ends, the other must as well. Engels is correct to find doctrines of impermanence, change, and movement in Hegel's dialectic. Engels is also correct, however, that Hegel does not sharply delineate these as consistently as he perhaps could have done. "They are a necessary conclusion from his method," as Engels says, "but one which he himself never explicitly drew. And this for the simple fact that he was compelled to make a system, and traditionally systems must conclude with some sort of absolute truth" (Engels *MEW* 21:268). In other words, Engels's critique of Hegel is some nascent form of the postmodern critique of system building and metanarratives:

> Marx, by emphasizing the need for consciousness, has held fast to the kernel of truth in Hegel's formulations about man being free only when he comprehends his history. Hegel had restricted his insight by claiming that man can only be conscious about what has happened 'after the owl of Minerva' has taken flight. Marx, more presumptuous, would have man 'make his own history' in the full light of reason. (Mazlish 1972: 337)

Ironic, since Marx and Engels themselves were inveterate system builders of the world-historical sort, and in fact took their impetus for such building from Hegel.

According to Engels's analysis, the end of history comes in Hegel's philosophy despite the Hegelian method's stress on process, because "he nevertheless finds himself compelled to supply this process with an end," an end which according to the *Logic* is also a beginning, because the ideal is then able to become actual in nature in the realization of the absolute. However, "at the end of the whole philosophy, a similar return to the beginning is possible only in one way, namely, by conceiving of the end of history [*das Ende der Geschichte*] thus: humanity arrives at knowledge of the absolute idea, and declares that this knowledge of the absolute idea is arrived at through Hegelian philosophy" (*MEW* 21:268). Because philosophy has reached an end point, history must have done so as well, for did not even Hegel himself recognize in his *Philosophy of History* that the ultimate purpose of the world (*der Endzweck der Welt*) is destined to be realized (Hegel *Werke* 12:29)? In the process of burning away all dogmatism, does not Hegel erect an ever more dogmatic conclusion for history, one founded on Hegelian reason and dedicated the explication of

the absolute through Hegelian categories? In Hegel's drive to produce a system, Engels says that this is exactly what happened; because he had to close off his system, make it complete and remove all contradictions, he was driven to proclaim absolute truth. Thus, Hegel's necessarily conservative *system* ruined his necessarily revolutionary *method*, requiring Marx and Engels to "free" the method from the system by reinterpreting the former through Feuerbach and others in order to reach a materialistic rather than an idealistic dialectic ("The inner necessities of the system are … sufficient to explain why a thoroughly revolutionary method produced an extremely tame political conclusion," Engels *MEW* 21:269). Hegel's proclamation of the end of world history was a result of his drive to supply his system with a solid and rational end. This is the conclusion that Nietzsche said Hegel almost reached, indeed should have reached. For Engels, Hegel does reach it, and in so doing invalidates his system so as to require a completely new interpretation along radically different lines of thought, i.e. those of Marx and Engels.

Engels makes an invaluable contribution to Hegel scholarship when he stresses, over against the full weight of most leftist criticism of Hegel, the necessarily processive and open-ended nature of the Hegelian dialectic. Engels was a close enough reader to recognize that Hegel's system could never really be the basis for any fully realized state regime without rendering the system unrecognizable – this is precisely why Marxism is Marxism and not Hegelianism, for example, however often the two might be confused and however fruitful the latter might have proved for the development of the former. Unfortunately, Engels commits the same error as Nietzsche: while admitting that Hegel does not draw explicit conclusions, he feels it necessary to fill in Hegel's gaps. By drawing conclusions which Hegel simply does not draw (and could never have drawn), Engels gives strength to a reading of Hegel which does little actual justice to Hegel's own philosophical thinking about history. As I pointed out in Chapter 2 on Nietzsche (indeed, as Nietzsche himself pointed out), Hegel nowhere says that his philosophy heralds the end of history. Is Engels's reading a *possible* interpretation of Hegel? Yes, insofar as it is Hegel's gaps, as it were, that more often than not prove most fruitful in interpreting his work. Is it a *necessary* interpretation? Without doubt, the answer is a resounding "No," and this is what is most important, for neither is it an *adequate* interpretation. It is hardly special pleading to ask for another hearing on the end of history matter in Hegel based on the interpretations of Nietzsche and Engels, for both philosophers draw conclusions from Hegelian philosophy that complicate more than they solve. If Engels is correct, and the Hegelian *method* is at odds with the Hegelian *system* (does it even make sense to speak of them as if they were separate entities?) we must conclude that Hegel was simply incoherent, or merely lazy, or at best blind to a glaring contradiction in his own thought. Engels's reading is more plausible than Nietzsche's, though Engels also gets

Hegel wrong on this point. Engels goes to great pains to detail exactly what he thought Hegel was saying, or (like Nietzsche) should have been saying, though in the end he chooses to emphasize one aspect of the system over another. This is not in itself a great error (interpretation is all about emphases), but insofar as Engels's reinterpretation of Hegel introduces a terrible contradiction that is not otherwise present (in addition to being explicitly at the service of his own philosophical project), more than a little skepticism is warranted when considering the end of history Engels wishes to present. In fact, Engels draws conclusions from Hegel that are deeply at odds with the overall tenor of Hegel's work, and this alone should give serious pause to any consideration of Engels as the best guide to what, if anything, Hegel thought about the end of history.

4 Hegel and Kojève

> Before being embodied in humanity, the Hegelian *Weltgeist*, which has abandoned the nations, inhabits empires.
>
> Alexandre Kojève, "Outline of a Doctrine of French Policy," 2004

> It is more important that a proposition be interesting than that it be true.
>
> Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 1967

4.1 The French Hegelian renaissance

In *Margins of Philosophy*, Jacques Derrida (1982: 73) remarks, "It is often said that Hegelianism represents the fulfillment of metaphysics, its end and accomplishment. Thus, it is to be expected that Hegelianism would give to these constraints their most systematic and powerful form, taken to their limits." Mirroring this insight, it would be correct to say that the Hegelianism of Alexandre Kojève (1902–68) represents a limit of its own, the limit that philosophical thinking about history can attain. For it is in Kojève's reading of Hegel that history reaches its utmost end; no thinker thematizes the end of history in Hegel as systematically and as thoroughly as does Kojève. Indeed, it would be true to say that despite the powerful statements about Hegel and the end of history found in Nietzsche and Engels, the end of history myth as modern scholarship knows it is the product of Kojève's work on Hegel. However important the nineteenth-century critics of Hegel were to the development of the idea, when scholars wish to speak of Hegel's end of history thesis, they invariably turn not to Hegel's immediate followers, or even to Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, but to Kojève's 1933–39 lectures on Hegel, published in 1947 as *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* (the 1980 English translation contains just under half of Kojève's text). Kojève, who recognized the revolutionary potential in Hegel's work, is also a critical figure in twentieth-century Marxian Hegelianism. By interpreting Marx via Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (something Marx himself does not do), Kojève allowed non-Marxian thinkers who might otherwise have given Marx and his influences short shrift in the politically polarized period of the Cold War to appropriate the insights of a Marxian reading.

Kojève's work has influenced virtually all subsequent appraisals of Hegel's philosophy of history, though for various reasons Kojève's is by far the least convincing account of Hegel's actual arguments about history. There is a long history of criticism of Kojève's work on Hegel in English, as well as German and his native French, and rather than belabor old points dealing with the idiosyncrasies of Kojève's use and misuse of Hegel, this study focuses on the importance of history for Kojève and how this contrasts with Hegel's own understanding of the historical process. By reading him in this way, Kojève's crucial role in the development of the end of history mythology becomes clear. The crux of the problem with Kojève's reading of Hegel is this: he bases his interpretation of the historical themes in Hegel's philosophy on the identification of time (*die Zeit*) and the concept (*der Begriff*) at the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel *Werke* 3:584; cf. the definition of *Begriff* given in *Werke* 1:26), suggesting that when the concept is fully realized, time, and thus history, is also complete. "*Die* Zeit *ist der* Begriff *selbst*" as Hegel puts it; time as history and the concept as the movement of spirit are coextensive such that the consummation (*vollenden*) of *der Begriff* amounts to the cancelation (*tilgen*) of time. Naturally, this means that time as history, that is, *Geschichte* rather than *Historie*, must come to an end when the concept as the movement of spirit reaches its natural fulfillment, whatever that fulfillment might entail. So far, we are within Hegel's philosophical demesne. Kojève's next interpretive move is to detail that fulfillment in specific historical terms, and his reading results in perhaps his most fascinating misreading of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. In a troubling move, though one fully in line with his Western Marxian historical commitments, Kojève interprets the entirety of history as the story of the *Herr–Knecht* dialectic from the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Werke* 3:145ff.), which ends once the difference between master and servant is suspended,[1] locating the end of history in 1806 with the battle of Jena and Hegel's completion of the *Phenomenology*. Once the pernicious struggle between the master and the servant is overcome, history has achieved its zenith and the concept's process of becoming has come to an end.

It is difficult to overestimate Kojève's influence on subsequent Hegelian studies on the Continent, particularly interpretations of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which is Kojève's favored text. One of the most positive aspects of Kojève's teaching on Hegel is that Kojève inaugurated the trend in modern Hegel studies to emphasize Hegel as an important thinker about history. Before Kojève, Hegel was mainly read as a consummate systematizer whose work in

[1] I am persuaded by W. A. Suchting's argument that the English word "suspend" is the best translation for the German *aufheben* and its derivatives, and will frequently use this in lieu of the more common "sublate." For Suchting's reasoning and a thorough defense of "suspend," see the discussion in Hegel *EL* xxxv–vi. Suchting's argument is one no Hegel scholar working in English should overlook.

history was only the outer trappings of his inner metaphysical core. This is the heart of Marx's claim to have turn Hegel "right side up," away from the (inner) spiritual dialectic and towards the (outer, historical) materialist dialectic. Kojève, however, is the key figure in returning Hegelian studies to its roots in Hegel's concern with history and events; whatever our assessment of his specific interpretation of Hegel, Kojève's rightful place in the history of Hegel's history is assured. Though not as directly influential in France as Kojève, mention should also be made of Georg Lukács's influence on the development of Hegelian thought in the twentieth century. Known particularly for developing a form of Marxian-Hegelian thought amenable to Eastern Bloc countries such as his native Hungary (Lukács served as the Minister of Culture in the brief Hungarian Soviet Republic after World War I), Lukács is one of the twentieth century's great Marxian Hegelians. Nevertheless, as Tom Rockmore (1992: 557) explains:

> It is an error to consider [Lukács's] Marxism as basically Hegelian for two reasons. First, Lukács's reading of classical German philosophy depends crucially on his creative extension of Kant's problem of the thing-in-itself to all of classical German philosophy from Kant to Hegel. Second, Lukács argues in detail that classical German philosophy is unable to resolve the problem of the thing-in-itself, but that the latter is solved by Marx. Lukács's reading of Marx's solution of the Kantian problem, which he extends to all of classical German philosophy, depends [not on his use of Hegel but] on his appropriation of Fichte's position.

Rockmore goes on to argue quite convincingly that Lukács's thought is really about Lukács, not Hegel – not illegitimate by any means, but not at all the same thing; in this chapter, I argue almost the same thing (albeit in a different way) about Kojève's appropriation of Hegel.

That history ends in Hegel, according to Kojève, is not to disregard the centrality of history itself. Rather, the course and culmination of history are the heart and soul of Hegel's philosophy. Kojève deserves all the credit for firmly establishing this perspective on Hegel's philosophy for subsequent generations; indeed my own work in this book, however it rejects Kojève's understanding of Hegelian history, would have been unthinkable before Kojève (re-)introduced a historical Hegel to the world. Still, it was Kojève who claimed that Hegel adduced the end of history in the rise of Napoleon specifically, and more generally in the nascent political freedoms achieved in the rise of the modern nation state, a myth still recited as political truth and relied upon for contemporary study of geopolitical issues by analysts more interested in quoting others on Hegel than searching out Hegel's own ideas. This is an outgoing problem at the highest level of political argumentation; see for example Mead (2014), who even continues to use Fukuyama's discredited reading of Hegel via Kojève without ever seeming to realize it is Kojève, not Hegel, that he is expounding. Kojève is the source of the modern myth. Continuing the trend

beyond Kojève's own time, his reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is in turn the basis for Fukuyama's claim (Fukuyama 1992) that history reached its culmination in the Hegelian sense with the end of the Cold War and the burgeoning worldwide success of free-market liberal democracy. Though Kojève's work is pivotal in that he forces Hegelian philosophy to acknowledge that history must have limits if the freedom which the spirit seeks is to be achieved, his assessment of the *Herr–Knecht* dialectic is deeply flawed when compared to Hegel's actual statements in the *Phenomenology* and elsewhere. (For a coherent argument in favor of Kojève's reading of Hegel and the end of history, see Cooper 1984. Though he realizes that Kojève's argument is often difficult to follow and makes leaps in logic that are difficult to support in Hegel's texts, Cooper maintains that Kojève's basic argument is sound.) This is to take nothing away from Kojève's originality, or the power of his interpretation. Indeed, its originality and power can be seen in the fact that Kojève's Hegel is too often taken to be Hegel himself. A representative example of this substitution can be found in a remark Žižek makes about Lacan's use of Hegel (Žižek 2006: 1–2):

> It may seem strange to count Hegel among Lacan's "silent partners" – in the index of names in *Écrits*, Hegel appears more often than Freud himself! If, however, there is a philosopher who deserves this title, it is Hegel: Lacan's almost exclusive Hegelian reference is the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in its reading by Alexandre Kojève … so that, in a digitalized version of *Écrits*, one can, almost with impunity, enact the operation "Replace Hegel with Kojève."

It is this strange substitutionary understanding of Kojève's work that concerns the end of history myth, for Kojève's idea of the end of history should not be imputed to Hegel; indeed, Kojève's *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* is not a particularly useful introduction to reading Hegel, if what one wants is Hegel, rather than Kojève. For that matter, Kojève's book is not a particularly good introduction to how to read Hegel via Marx, if what one wants is to understand Marx's appropriation of Hegel, rather than Kojève's. As a guide to Kojève's thought, however, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* remains the ideal starting place.

At the turn of the nineteenth century and especially in the wake of the Great War, German thought in non-German speaking nations underwent something of a trenchant reappraisal. In anglophone countries, particularly Great Britain, Hegel in particular was called into question, both for his supposed reactionary political views and for the sheer impenetrability of his thought for the philosophy of logical analysis that was coming into its own at this time. The Hegelian texts which were best known in Britain at the time, mainly Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik* and *Enzyklopädie*, are among Hegel's most difficult, particularly in translation, and among his most obviously metaphysical. These facts worked against Hegelian philosophy, politically as well as philosophically. In fact, philosophers such as G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell were influential in bringing

about something akin to an all-out British rejection of Hegelian thought. Moore (1993: 34) writes, "Hegel's main service to philosophy has consisted in giving a name to and erecting into a principle, a type of fallacy to which experience had shown philosophers along with the rest of mankind to be addicted. No wonder that he has followers and admirers." For his part, Russell, commenting on Hegel's philosophy of history, remarks "It was an interesting thesis, giving unity and meaning to the revolutions of human affairs. Like other historical theories, it required … some distortion of facts and considerable ignorance. Hegel, like Marx and Spengler after him, possessed both of these qualifications" (Russell 1945: 735). Moreover, immediately following World War II, few works dealing with Hegel had more influence in anglophone philosophical and political circles than Karl Popper's assault on Hegel in his 1945 two-volume treatise *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. In this work, the Plato of *Republic* and the Hegel of the *Phänomenologie* are accorded blame for virtually every oppressive and retrograde social and philosophical manifestation of Western culture in the preceding two millennia, culminating for Popper in National Socialism (singled out by Popper as a specific result of Hegelian political thought). Though Popper's screed against Hegel fails to command the attention it once did in the twentieth century, the damage had been done. Along with Popper's work, Hubert Kiesewetter's work on Hegel should be mentioned as continuing the nineteenth-century misidentification of Hegel's political philosophy with violent and militaristic nationalism. Strongly influenced by Popper (with whom he studied in London), Kiesewetter's dissertation under Ernst Topitsch at Heidelberg was published in 1974 as *Von Hegel zu Hitler: Die politische Verwirklichung einer totalitären Machtstaatstheorie in Deutschland*, and was heavily influenced by Heller's *Hegel und die nationale Machtstaatsgedanke* (1921). Kiesewetter argued that "Hegel's theory of state power was constitutive for the Third Reich" (Kiesewetter 1974: 6). This work was not accepted at Heidelberg because of its inflammatory claims and hostility from the faculty; Kiesewetter later completed a thesis at the Berlin Free University in 1985 on industrialization in Saxony. Though Kiesewetter's thought has had little influence on anglophone Hegelian scholarship, it demonstrates the extent to which the "Nazi Hegel myth" was taken seriously in certain circles well into the twentieth century.

Yet in France, Hegel's works enjoyed a new popularity, particularly on the political left, and the revival of Hegel's philosophy in the late twentieth century can be attributed largely to this French Hegelian renaissance of the 1930s–1940s. Rather than identifying Hegel with the forces of oppression occupying France from across the Rhine, the French left in the twentieth century (much like the Prussian left in the nineteenth) read Hegel as an intellectual freedom fighter. Jean Wahl's *Le malheur de conscience dans le philosophie de Hegel* (1929) was an early indication of the direction this revival would take. "In Hegel's early texts, Wahl found a budding existentialist, a *copain* who would

have identified with Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, and with the anxiety that many of Wahl's readers felt at the beginning of the 1930s" (Roth 1988: 3). Alexandre Koyré's lectures on Hegel at the *École pratique des hautes études* in Paris were also influential in reintroducing Hegel's thought to France. Koyré's work on Hegel was particularly important because he acknowledged Hegel not as a simple Romantic existentialist but as a profound system builder; Koyré was one of the first philosophers in the twentieth century to realize the continuity of thought between Hegel's early works at Jena and his mature writings (Koyré 1971). However, Kojève's Marxian interpretations of Hegel lay at the root of the French revival, particularly the lectures Kojève delivered in the mid to late 1930s in Paris. In them, Kojève perfectly divined the political *Zeitgeist* of continental Marxism as it strove to come to terms with the results of the Great War as well as the growing fears that another, perhaps even more terrible conflict lay just over the horizon. Kojève also uniquely represented the ongoing intellectual struggle within Marxist thought between what was later to emerge as Stalinist interpretations of Marx, and more liberal and socialistic versions. Kojève placed Hegel's philosophy at the heart of this struggle, understanding that nothing less than the freedom of humanity was at stake. Kojève expounded a more liberal Western Marxist vision, particularly as he understood Hegel's end of history to coincide with the arrival on the world-historical scene of freedom for the economically and socially oppressed. It is a lasting tribute to Kojève's faith in the end of history, whatever the status of that theory, that, after World War II, he more or less abandoned philosophy and entered the French Ministry of Economic Affairs, where he worked on the development of the European Common Market. It is apparent that for Kojève, as philosophy had realized the end of history, the appropriate response of an engaged citizen was to labor as a civil servant, helping to realize the dream of universal freedom that Hegel had announced. No matter one's assessment of his philosophy, Kojève is an example of an intellectual deeply engaged in the life of the world and dedicated to its betterment, as he understood it. This is a clue to understanding why Kojève wrongly privileged Hegel's *Herr–Knecht* dialectic over other lures of thought within Hegel's writings, and why he taught that the overcoming of the master by the servant represented the ideological end of history.

4.2 Desire and the dialectic of history

Kojève's presentation of Hegelian thought in his *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* revolves around a profoundly original and suggestive interpretation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The published lectures begin with Kojève's translation and detailed reading of the famed section of Hegel's *Phenomenology* entitled "Independence and Dependence of the Self-Consciousness: Mastery and Servitude." Without exaggeration, Kojève's entire interpretation of Hegel

(and the subsequent influence of this interpretation) is built around the primacy Kojève sees in the master–servant (*Herr–Knecht*) motif in Hegel's 1806 work. Kojève's interpretation of Hegel is always deeply anthropological; that is, it begins by explicating Hegel's thought in terms of human consciousness and psychology. As consciousness as such blossoms into self-consciousness, it becomes aware of others that are not itself, giving rise to the desire for mastery through domination. Hegel thematizes an insight that Plato's Thrasymachus adduces in *Republic* 344c: "Thus, Socrates, injustice, is a stronger, freer, and a more masterful [δεσποτικώτερον] thing than justice, if it sufficiently large, and … indeed the just profits the stronger, while the unjust is what profits him and is for his advantage." For Thrasymachus, mastery by the despot (δεσπότης) is a prescriptive norm of human relations and must naturally and inevitably govern all social interactions. However, for both Hegel and Kojève this drive to dominate is a natural stage of human consciousness to be dialectically overcome. Hegel differs from Hobbes in this sense, for the natural state of humanity which is driven by diffidence, competition, and glory-seeking (Hobbes, *Leviathan* I.xiii.6) must be socially overcome via the creation of the Commonwealth and the social contract (*Leviathan* II.xvii.13), and not, as Hegel understands it, dialectically overcome as the spirit comes to know itself as itself within human life. Hegel cannot offer a social model of the state (his *Rechtphilosophie*) until he has offered a dialectical-transcendental model of the self (the *Phenomenology*). For this reason the *Phenomenology of Spirit* has been termed a *Bildungsroman* by, among others, Judith Butler (1999: 17, 240), who calls it "an optimistic narrative of adventure and edification, a pilgrimage of the spirit" as well as a "psychological novel" of the emerging self.

According to Kojève, the manifestation of human self-consciousness is not first for mastery, but solely in *desire* as such (Kojève 1980: 3), and in this he follows Hegel, who also says that "self-consciousness is desire in general" (cf. Hegel *Werke* 3:139). Kojève absolutizes this relationship of desire, believing that all action begins in and ends in such a desire, and thus he is able to assert that "all action is 'negating.' Far from leaving the given as it is, action destroys it; if not in its being, at least in its given form" (Kojève 1980: 4). The given is never given as such, nor does the given ever remain simply within that which it gives; desire essentially and immediately turns to *desire for*, that is, desire is teleological (an Aristotelian insight which is deeply Hegelian). Any desire which remains within itself as desire as such and forsakes its teleological essence dooms itself to frustration and is therefore not a healthy desire (a desire *for*) but one that can be only pathological (desire *as such*). Desire must always partake of its proper aim if it is to be fulfilled, that is, if it is to complete its own nature and become what it is. Kojève has to appropriate Aristotle if he is to appropriate Hegel; this is a key to understanding Kojève (and Hegel) that is almost always forgotten. "For Kojève, the proper aim of desire is the transformation of natural givens into reflections of human consciousness," writes

Butler (1999: 67), "for only through taking this process of transformation as its object can desire manifest itself as the transformative power that it is." Desire is primarily transformational rather than emotional; its value is not the passion which the desire evokes, but the power of change which the desire awakens. Desire is not psychologically basic for Hegel as it is for Hobbes or Freud. Desires are themselves socially constituted (Aristotle) and therefore part of the inheritance of *Dasein* in the thrownness (Heidegger) of its world as such. Of course, neither Kojève nor Hegel should be read as understanding desire in a purely non-erotic manner. The erotics of the dialectic is crucial to the transformation that it enacts. Fundamentally, the transformative power of desire is an integral part of Hegelian human self-consciousness, for it makes humanity reflect upon what it could be, yet is not.

In Hegel, desire becomes the projection of the (politically as well as the erotically) possible, because such desire is always caught up in the becoming of the self, which, grounded in the political realm of *Sittlichkeit*, emerges as an autonomous whole only when it comes to realize that it is constituted by its belonging to a world. Hegelian desire is finally a mode of self-realization or self-actualization, wherein differences are overcome and healed in the outworking of spirit's coming to know itself as itself. Hegelian desire always proleptically partakes of its teleological fulfillment *beyond itself*. The interpreters of Hegel who rely heavily on Marx or Freud for their methodology are less sanguine about the possibility of transcendence and self-transcendence in Hegel. Westphal says that Hegel never moves beyond cosmological transcendence in his intellectual pantheism and thus cannot even begin to dialectically describe human transcendence and self-transcendence. "If Hegel speaks of God as 'the absolute Person,' it is not because he affirms an actual, personal creator ontologically independent of the world; it is rather because the self-actualizing idea … produces human persons; and Hegel is inclined to deify (and reify) humanity when, as thought, it has reached a certain standpoint" (Westphal 2004: 79). For Lacan, who says that the "fundamental Hegelian theme" is "the desire for the other" (Lacan 1991: 146), fulfillment is always inhibited by a "gap" which is only ever reflexively overcome in the fantasy-act of self-creation which is at the same time self-deception. "That's what love is," according to Lacan (1991: 142). "It's one's own ego that one loves in love, one's own ego made real on the imaginary level." The object of desire, Lacan's *objet petit a*, is always a mask of the self, the self hidden from itself. The inevitable rivalry that emerges as the self finds itself frustrated in its achievement of meaning and casts about to find an object upon which to vent its frustrations is thus a pathetic self-loathing unknowingly disguised as animus towards the other.

> Desire is first grasped in the other, and in the most confused form. The relativity of human desire in relation to the desire of the other is what we recognize in every reaction of rivalry, of competition, and even in the entire development of civilization, including this sympathetic and fundamental exploitation of man by man whose end is by no

means in sight, for the reason that it is absolutely structural to, and constitutes, as Hegel acknowledged once and for all, the very structure of the idea of labour. To be sure, it is no longer a question of desire here, but of the total mediation of activity in so far as it is specifically human, in so far as it has taken the path of human desires. (Lacan 1991: 147)

Lacan's notion of human desire rests content in an idealized form of overcoming: "What [one] recognizes and fixes in this image of the other is a fragmented desire. And the apparent mastery of the mirror image is given to him, at least virtually, as complete. It is an ideal mastery" (Lacan 1991: 148). Not so for Kojève, for whom the mastery always remains within the real world of labor, class, and politics.

Unlike the unselfconscious consciousness of non-human animals, human self-consciousness has a subjective-temporal aspect to it, says Hegel. It knows it exists within time, and knowing this, human desire does not desire just any given object per se. Human desiring is aimed at its own becoming, beyond survival and towards something fuller, an end which is transformative and productive of meaning among the changes and chances of serendipitous creativity. As is often the case, Hegel's account squares in important respects with Aristotle's philosophy. For Aristotle, this end which has no other end is εὐδαιμονία (*Nic. Eth.* 1097b7–21; 1098a16–18). Aristotle sees this end as an end intimately caught up with human belonging within society, because justice and freedom are always the concern of the πολιτικὸν ζῷον (Aristotle, *Politics* 1253a1–5). To speak of human desiring as primarily an individual rather than social phenomenon would be incoherent for Aristotle as well as Hegel: the social self in the πόλις is prior to the individual self, and the person who can flourish apart from the social self "is either a beast or a god" but manifestly not a human as such (*Politics* 1253a29). Hegel's *Phenomenology* is essentially his attempt to reestablish Aristotle's anthropopolitical insights within the horizon of German Idealism. Thus Aristotle's profound insight into human sociality is the basis for Hegel's seminal claim in the *Phenomenology* that "complete freedom and independence [*vollkommenen Freiheit und Selbständigkeit*]" emerges from self-consciousness's realization that it is constituted by/as an "I that is We, and We that is I [*Ich,* das *Wir,* und *Wir,* das *Ich*]" (Hegel *Werke* 3:145) and which stands against "absolute freedom and terror [*absolute Freiheit und der Schrecken*]" (Hegel *Werke* 3:431). "Complete" freedom is grounded in a matrix of belonging, whereas "absolute" freedom is alienating and results in terror (or, in Hegel's own assessment of his times, *La Terreur*). The reflexivity of desire which is grounded in a dialectical *Ich und Wir* is neither wholly communitarian nor wholly individualistic. Hegel's assessment of Kantian *Moralität* as a necessary but abstract and incomplete aspect of *Sittlichkeit* in the *Philosophy of Right* is a classic example of the attempt to overcome the (Kojèvian/Lacanian) unidirectional alienation of desire by the reflexivity and

plasticity of a socially founded yet individually emergent (i.e. truly dialectical) self. The *Philosophy of Right* is the "conceptualization" of the emergence of selfhood as an I and a We; the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is the earlier "novelization" of this emergence.

Reflexive desiring as a fundamentally socio-dialectical reality is central to the political and anthropological commitments of both Aristotle and Hegel. Moreover, the reflexivity of desire is a mode of *In-der-Welt-sein* and a possible point of contact between Hegel, Aristotle, and Heidegger. In fact, "Hegel's 'reflexion in itself' represents a figure of thought in which an Aristotelian legacy predominated and was renewed and which at the same time was not utterly remote from Heidegger's thought, which had been nourished upon the critique of Greek ontology" (Gadamer 1996: 42). Political self-understanding and self-understanding as such coincide for all three thinkers in important ways, though Heidegger more self-consciously goes his own way in his attempt to overcome what he calls the ontotheological constitution of Hegelian and Aristotelian metaphysics. What is different is the status of the dialectic in each. In Aristotle, since *εὐδαιμονία* is the good end which seeks no further end, there is also the possibility of termination involved, ultimately the termination of death. This is the context of Aristotle's acceptance of Solon's claim that we call no one happy (*εὐδαίμον*) until death (Aristotle *Nic. Eth.* 1100a10). On the other hand, the Hegelian dialectic is an always ongoing process that, while teleological, is never terminal. Thus Hegel takes the best insights of Aristotelian teleology and extends them into a contemporary setting wherein the creative advance into novelty is a never-ending appropriation of the evental nature of the world. For Hegel, the advance is about the event, not the end. Finally, for Heidegger the reflexivity of desire is no longer expressed via a dialectic but a hermeneutical spiral or circle (Heidegger *SZ* 152–53) which is not to be avoided. Rather, one seeks to "enter it in the right way" so as to situate oneself to the preparation of the disclosure of truth within the clearing of being. Heidegger returns to the Aristotelian theme of death, but typically sees it neither as an end nor as a final verdict on *εὐδαιμονία* but rather a human phenomenon which is the "*ownmost nonrelational possibility not to be bypassed*" (Heidegger *SZ* 250–51). As such, human being-towards-death shelters within it "two basic determinations" characterized by the *Nicht*, the "not," and *Notwendigkeit*, "necessity," which together are "the collision of necessity and possibility" (Heidegger *GA* 65:282–83). Such a sheltering is for Heidegger the fruitful matrix of human decision in the clearing of being, a clearing that, insofar as it requires the situatedness of the Fourfold, is akin to the Aristotelian *πόλις* and the Hegelian *Wir und Ich*. In the Fourfold, Heidegger's appropriation of dialectical language becomes the *Einkehr*, the reflexive inturning of "the flash of the truth of being" which is insight, *Einblick* (Heidegger *GA* 11:121). Aristotelian *πόλις*, Hegelian

Wir und Ich, Heideggerian *Geviert* – all three are participatory modes which reveal human *Dasein* to be situated and social.[2]

Kojève has a very different take on the social dialectic and the place of desiring within it. According to Kojève, human desire creates a world centered on the desiring self. Kojève's is a phenomenology of the erotic self, a Cartesian *ego-eros* which engulfs, destroys, and is self-creating and self-becoming within time. The communal self is a product of the desiring self, and not the other way around as it is for Aristotle and Hegel. With Kojève, we end with the social self which is free and equal, whereas for both Aristotle and Hegel we begin with a social self that is encumbered and situated. Freedom and equality are social realities which only have meaning when embedded within and defined by a larger communal norm. Although he is very uncomfortable with the idea, Franco (1999: 259) is partially correct when he says that "Hegel's political philosophy rests on an organicism in which collective or communal self-actualization takes precedence over individual self-actualization." Franco's unease with this reading of Hegel's idea of freedom stems from his fear that it is a concession to communitarian romanticism (1999: 345). What is lacking in Franco's analysis is the idea that individual and communal self-actualization cannot be opposed in Hegel so easily. The dialectical becoming of the self is both an individual and communal reality; it is Hegel's synthesis of Aristotle's idea of man as a *πολιτικὸν ζῷον* and Kant's autonomous morality within a kingdom of ends. Wood (1990: 237) is much better on the relation between Hegel's ethics and his political theory, which is "based on the conditions for human self-actualization in the modern world, and an attempt to show that modern social institutions provide for self-actualization." Any other sort of freedom is violent, aggressive willfulness condemned in the *Phenomenology* as "absolute freedom" which leads inevitably to "terror" – both moral terror and *la Terreur* of 1793 (Hegel *Werke* 3:385ff.).

Yet this is exactly how Kojève begins his formulation of human freedom and development. The idea of freedom is one of the great gulfs which stands between Hegel and Kojève. Freedom in Kojève begins as freedom for the individual *I* which becomes individual in and through its realization of freedom. "In other words," Kojève says, "the very being of this *I* will be becoming, and the universal form of this being will not be space, but time … Thus this *I* will

[2] And thus historical? Susan Roberts (2013: 134) says not; Aristotle's notion of being is "not just unhistorical, but anti-historical." Accordingly, Roberts is critical of Heidegger's appropriation of Aristotle's ontological thinking. In so doing, however, she separates Aristotle's ontology from his politics. It is hard to understand what Aristotle means by his claim *ὁ ἄνθρωπος φύσει πολιτικὸν ζῷον* if man is not *κατα φύσιν* situated, thrown, and social – that is, in a Hegelian and Heideggerian sense, "historical." The *πολιτικὸν ζῷον* is at least temporal, because virtue is a habitual, learned state which results from the repetition of virtuous acts (*Nic. Eth.* 1103b20–25). Temporality implies a processive state of change which, no matter how deeply underwritten by eternal *ὐυσία*, is nevertheless very real to Aristotle.

be its own product: it will be (in future) what it has become by negation (in the present) of what it was (in the past) … This *I* is a (human) individual, free … and historical" (Kojève 1980: 5). Hegel does not oppose individual freedom to societal obligation, but neither is he as clear about this in the *Phänomenologie* as he is, say, in the *Rechtphilosophie*. Kojève takes this difference to be a statement about the individual will. In other words, "human history is the history of desired Desires" (1980: 6). Since human desire must play itself out on the stage of history, such a desire has to contend with other desires, other specifically human desires, and according to Kojève this is the basis for history, culture, and indeed the "humanity" of human beings. The production of the self is a violent act of self-assertion in the teeth of the other that keeps it down and threatens its own self-description and self-identification. Value is produced in the struggle of desires, for only through the conflict and realization of human desires does history move beyond mere events and take on the quality of meaning that both Kojève and Hegel intend by history proper. To answer the Sophoclean problem of *Antigone* and the conflict of competing legitimate norms, Plato poses the harmonious republic, Aristotle the virtuous *πόλις*, and Hegel the suspension of *Moralität* by the *Sittlichkeit* of civil society. Kojève poses the politico-erotic self, whose violent and victorious fulfillment heralds the end of the conflict and thus the end of history.

The process by which desire produces human meaning Kojève calls *reconnaissance* or recognition, for this is the essence of human desire – the "anthropogenetic desire" to be recognized by an other which is not myself (1980: 7). In philosophers such as Emmanuel Lévinas, this quest for recognition is an ethical search wherein the self and the other attain their being in one and the same movement, though always with an ethical privileging of the other which resists adequation. With Kojève, however, there is an ineradicable violence to the process which ends only when desire is fulfilled in the death of the other who opposes the self's desire, or the substitution of the self and its desire for the other's self and the other's desire (1980: 7). According to Renault (2001: 174), "Hegel inherits the Rousseauian problematic of universal recognition and the Fichtean problematic of recognition as a condition of self-consciousness." The self only reaches self-consciousness insofar as it successfully asserts its desires in the world and is accorded recognition by the other whom its desire has subjugated. Therefore, the process of recognition is what Kojève calls "a fight to the death" wherein "each of the two beings endowed with such a desire is ready to go all the way in pursuit of its satisfaction; that is, ready to risk its life – and consequently to put the life of the other in danger – in order to be recognized by the other" (Kojève 1980: 7). However, because death involves the loss of the other and hence the recognition accorded the self by the other, Kojève introduces the idea of recognition via domination through Hegel's dialectic of the master (*der Herr*) and servant (*der Knecht*) from the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

At first, Kojève gives a more or less standard gloss to Hegel's *Herr–Knecht* dialectic. Because human existence is social, the death of the other would also negate the life of the self. Therefore, the other has to submit to the self (or the self to the other), though in so doing it gives up for the time being its own quest for recognition in the name of simple survival: submission is preferable to death. Therefore "he must give up his desire and satisfy the desire of the other: he must 'recognize' the other without being 'recognized' by him. Now, to 'recognize' him thus is 'to recognize' him as his master, and to recognize himself and to be recognized as the master's slave" (1980: 8). The self-abnegating role of the *Knecht* is prominent in Hegel's own phenomenology of the master and servant, as is the idea that the servant submits to preserve its own existence – "self-consciousness learns that life is as essential to it as pure self-consciousness" and thus submits (Hegel *Werke* 3:150).

What is groundbreaking in Kojève's reading of Hegel is his insistence that the *Herr–Knecht* relationship does not characterize any particular stage of human consciousness (as it clearly does for Hegel), but that it describes the entirety of the development of human consciousness. As Kojève says, "If the human being is begotten only in and by the fight that ends in the relation between Master and Slave, the progressive realization and revelation of this being can themselves be effected only in terms of this fundamental social relation" (Kojève 1980: 9) – that is, the master–servant relation. It then follows, as Kojève puts it, that "history must be the history of [this] interaction" (1980: 9); history is the outworking of the *Herr–Knecht* relationship. Lest Kojève's reading be viewed as entirely psychological and his theory of history lack any real-world application, it is important to realize just how history comes about through the *Herr–Knecht* dialectic, according to Kojève. First, Kojève says that this dialectic it is not simply an existential stance one takes vis-à-vis the world, but rather something that takes place in reality, with real social consequences. The fight for recognition takes place in the natural world, that is, the external realm which plays host to the development of human consciousness, and which is itself developed as human consciousness grows into self-consciousness. "For man is real only to the extent that he lives in a natural world … he must 'deny' [the natural world], transform it, fight it, in order to realize himself within it. But without this world, outside of this world, man is nothing" (1980: 14). Kojève stresses real life to forestall any accusations of solipsism or idealism in his philosophy of history. Human self-consciousness comes into its own in the real world of history, events, and time – and while it is true that self-consciousness, the fight for recognition, and the expression of desire are the engines of historical change, they are also shaped and made real by historical change. Kojève's dialectic of desire and domination is a worldly dialectic in the best sense of Marx's "Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach" – "the philosophers have hitherto only *interpreted* the world in various ways – the point, however, is to

change it" (Marx *MECW* 5:3). But it is not clear that it is a meaningful dialectic in the Hegelian sense of the word. In fact, it is not.

Consider Kojève's way of relating the *Herr–Knecht* relationship to the overall dialectic of history. Returning to the notion that domination rather than death is the preferred outcome of the relationship, Kojève says "it does the man of the fight no good to kill his adversary. He must overcome him 'dialectically.' That is, he must leave him life and consciousness, and destroy only his autonomy … In other words, he is to enslave him" (Kojève 1980: 15). It is hard to see how the destruction of autonomy is a true *Aufhebung*, in which the meaning of both partners in the dialectic are overcome and yet raised to a new status, simultaneously overcoming them both and yet preserving them both. It might be argued in Kojève's defense that this enslavement is only the first step in the dialectical movement, as it is in Hegel. Yet as his argument continues, it becomes clear that what passes for dialectic for Kojève is a mere upending, that is, the reversal of fortune which comes about when the slave overcomes the master and breaks his chains is the ultimate end and goal of the dialectical movement of history. Kojève, like Marx before him, has turned Hegel "right side up," only this turning turns out to be an inversion which does irreparable damage to the continuation of the ongoing dialectic. For Kojève, to culminate the dialectic is to end it; whatever this is, it is not dialectical. Here we have an example of one of the major themes of my study: when philosophers (including Hegel!) believe they have discovered the true end to the Hegelian dialectic, they err, and in erring they reduce Hegel's open-ended system to a caricature suited best to their own historical, ideological, and political needs. The end of history myth in all its forms is chief among these philosophical errors. For Hegel, Shiva-like, to end or culminate is to recapitulate and begin again; each end is a beginning, and each beginning is an end.

Kojève first privileges the master in the dialectic, in order to show that the dialectic itself has to be overcome in some way – his reading of Hegel's *Herr–Knecht* material wears its politics upon its sleeve, as it were. And yet, for all that, Kojève knows he cannot leave history as simply the process of masters and servants, for what is at stake is not mastery and domination, but freedom itself. Kojève's "paradigmatic case of freedom is not a traveler arrived at a fork in the road," observes Devlin (2004: 59), "but a soldier ready to act against his natural desire for self-preservation because of a principle, an idea." That idea, if it is *reconnaissance*, is the drive not only of recognition by the other, but first and foremost recognition of the self, by the self. Because Hegel points out that the recognition brought about through the *Herr–Knecht* dialectic is unequal and one-sided (which it must always be, for Hegel), Kojève says that this relation must not be a true *reconnaissance* after all (Kojève 1980: 19). According to Hegel, the dialectic is unequal at this stage exactly because eventually it must be overcome in a larger suspension of the privilege of the master and

the subservience of the slave, wherein both parties recognize their dependence upon the other in a truly reflexive fashion; this is why the truth for the master is the consciousness of the slave, and for the slave, the consciousness of the master (Hegel *Werke* 3:152). For Kojève, the reflexive-dialectical suspension of power in mutual recognition cannot be true freedom. Kojève is not interested in mutual recognition. Like Thrasymachus before him, it turns out that justice for Kojève is an assertive will to power which crushes its oppressor and sets itself up as the arbiter and orderer of things. Something else is needed, some new impetus must enter the relationship in order for history, and human consciousness, to attain to true freedom.

To find this missing element, Kojève returns to his earlier discussion of desire. Desire, he says, cannot be fulfilled by this uneven balance between mastery and servitude, for the end of desire is satisfaction and "if man can be satisfied only through recognition, the man who behaves as a master will never be satisfied" (Kojève 1980: 20). In fact, only the servant can ever be truly satisfied, or more precisely, only the one who has been a servant but has transcended that identity. The master is only master because the servant recognizes it as such (i.e. the master depends on the servant), but the servant can rest transparently in its own identity as a *worker*. Servants produce something which is their own, the product of their own hands – their labor. Masters can only command work be done, and then enjoy the fruits of another's labor. They remain tied to the work others do for them, however, even if the labor is coerced. In the purity of labor, only the servant is recognized, for its labor speaks for it and to it. The servant relies upon no one else for its recognition, for it produces that which represents itself in the world: "The master's 'truth' is the slave, and the slave's [truth is] work" (Kojève 1980: 20) – Kojève's commentary on Hegel's statement in the *Phenomenology* that "the truth of autonomous consciousness is therefore the consciousness of the servant" (Hegel *Werke* 3:152). Only the servant is truly autonomous, for only the servant's work makes it pure and focused, unlike the shiftless master: "If idle mastery is an impasse, laborious slavery … is the source of all human, social, historical progress. History is the history of the working slave" (Kojève 1980: 20). In shifting its desire for Hegelian recognition by an other to a Marxian recognition in and through its own production, the servant is able to achieve transcendence of its own situation, to progress beyond the boundaries imposed by the master's limited and self-serving search for recognition, in a word, to create a future – to create history (Kojève 1980: 22). Only labor can truly ensure that history is not a manifestation of animal nature, for labor makes the servant master over the natural world. Moreover, labor overcomes existential solipsism and the aggrandizement of the master. Labor makes the servant master of nature, and master of its own fate. The struggle for recognition is productive of history because it forces the servant to realize true freedom, which is autonomy of will, despite its external and

"natural" servitude. Only servants are truly free, and freedom is the achievement of the aims of history. History has an end. Where is it located?

"The future and history hence belong not to the warlike master," Kojève concludes, "who either dies or preserves himself indefinitely in identity to himself, but to the working slave" (1980: 23). Historical progress takes place only in the transcendence of the given, and only the servant can do this, since the given is always already given by the master. For the servant to accept the given as its own identity is to internalize its own servitude and thus fail to overcome its situation. However, if the servant transforms its world through its own production, its own work, which endures beyond itself and its master, the servant has overcome the initial fear which gave rise to the need for recognition, namely, the fear of death. Death holds terror for the master, for its own death ends its existence (for it passes on nothing material to time and memory), and the death of its servants reduces the number of those willing and able to bestow recognition upon it. However, the servant does not fear death (for its material production is its guarantee of existence into time and memory), and so has no need to seek recognition from an other beyond itself. It has its own affirmation in its work, its production, and even if the initial aim of its project is provided by the master, its self-consciousness is not tied up with the command, but with the products of the command, which belong to the servant who worked, not the master who commanded. Recall that for Kojève as well as for Hegel, the servant becomes the servant through the fear of death – also recall Aristotle's remark on *εὐδαιμονία* and death. The servant is unwilling to die when faced with the choice between death and servitude, and so it submits. But this submission is the source of its own actualization, for by submitting the servant opts out of the violent struggle with the master and finds its own meaning in its own work. History thus begins with the fear of death and the struggle for recognition which it engenders, but "if the fear of death … is the *sine qua non* of historical progress, it is solely the slave's work that realizes and perfects it" (Kojève 1980: 23). When the servant is truly free, the fear of death is overcome, and the struggle for recognition fulfilled. Historical progress has reached its fulfillment: history has reached its end.

Because only the servant's work overcomes the fear of death in its own self-assertive overcoming, Kojève is unable to tie together the master and servant in a fruitful dialectic that truly suspends them both in a more fully human state of human being. Absolute knowledge is for the servant the surmounting of the difference between itself and the master. But for Hegel, absolute knowledge is only gradually realized through art, and religion, and finally philosophy, which is the only mode of thought that moves beyond representational thinking to *der Begriff*, to the absolute concept in itself ("that which is truly permanent and substantial in the complexity and contingency of appearance [*Erscheinens*] and fleeting manifestation," Hegel *Werke* 5:26). However, such contingency is

for Hegel a necessary part that itself has to be overcome by finding the essence within the appearance. Marcuse (1999: 109–10) writes:

> [T]he term appearance or semblance has for Hegel a twofold meaning. It means first that a thing exists in such a way that its existence is different from its essence; secondly, it means that that which appears is not *mere* seeming … but is the expression of an essence that *exists* only *as appearing*. In other words, the appearance is not a non-being but is the appearance of the essence.

The Hegelian distinction between appearance as *Verstand*, understanding or conditioned knowledge of finite things, and knowledge as *Vernunft*, reason or unconditioned awareness of the absolute, is also important here. According to Kant, when one attempts to achieve unconditioned knowledge of the absolute, *Vernunft* fails – it is literally beyond the bounds of pure reason. Hegelian philosophy attempts to counter Kant by insisting that, while the distinction between *Vernunft* and *Verstand* exists, knowledge must go beyond the limited though inevitable categories of representation to grasp the concept itself. Kojève interprets this epistemological tradition via Marx, however, and so adds that understanding the world as Kant and Hegel did is insufficient without taking into account not only an interpretation of the world, but the Marxian account of how human action materially *effects* the world. The underlying "substructure" which supports all theoretical attempts at accounting for the world "is nothing but the totality of human actions realized during the course of universal history, that history in and by which man has created a series of specifically human worlds" (Kojève 1980: 32). Absolute knowledge such as Hegel seeks is revealed only within history, as humanity creates the world and comes to realize its freedom (Kojève is correct here), and that finally "absolute knowledge, which reveals the totality of being, can be realized only at the end of history, in the last world created by man" (32). This, however, is Kojève, not Hegel.

The end of history is necessary if Kojève is to explain the putative goal of human life, the realization of absolute freedom, along what he sees as Hegelian lines (let alone preserve the Aristotelian teleology of *εὐδαιμονία*). Hegel, of course, has no faith at all in anything calling itself "absolute" freedom, as mentioned above. Such "freedom" was the outcome of the French Revolution, which moved from freedom to terror within a short span of years. As a solely abstract freedom which cuts itself off from any existing other that might inhibit its willing, it manifests in pure negation, and thus "the sole work and deed of such a universal freedom is death" (Hegel *Werke* 3:436) and a meaningless, self-assertive death at that, which perishes cold and alone in its own self-willed sovereignty. "Freedom is freedom-with or it is nothing," writes Nancy (2002: 69–70), "because it is neither independence, not autonomy, not the free will of the subject – no more than it is the independence of many juxtaposed subjects, even to imagine them without oppositions."

Kojève's closure of the spirit's ἀγών in the master–servant struggle forgets this freedom-with (itself an echo of Heidegger's claim that *Dasein* is a concernful being-with) in favor of a single-minded privileging of the selfhood of the servant over the otherness of the master. The very soul of humanity, the relational need to exist with another, is exchanged for an aggrandizing desire which must find its way alone in an empty universe. Kojève's one-sided overcoming of the world in the triumph of the servant over the master and the effacement of mutual authority "is just this abstract consciousness, which destroys all difference and all persistence of difference within it. As such, this is its purpose: the *terror* of death is its view of the negativity of its being" (Hegel *Werke* 3:437).

It is out of terror that the servant creates a new world, the last world of the liberated servant. According to Kojève, Hegel believes that this last world created by man has come about, and that the "historical process … ends with Napoleon and his contemporaries" (1980: 35) because only with the French Revolution and its "enlightened" political aftermath did self-conscious autonomy enter into the sphere of human endeavor for the first time in a form (supposedly) no longer tied to contingent qualities such as race, sex, class, religion, etc. During one of the 1937 lectures Kojève corrected Hegel's identification of Napoleon as the mover of the world spirit, noting that it was Stalin, not Napoleon, who announced the end of history (Niethammer 1992: 65). After the war, Kojève moved his identification to Marx, and then back to Jena and the Hegel/Napoleon intersection; none of this made it into the English translation. But, Stalin or Napoleon, this is far from Hegel's own position. In fact, even though Hegel maintains that philosophy's job is to eliminate contingency (Hegel *VPW* 29) he never moves into a priori concepts of history uncoupled from the specifics of history, nor does he name any specific contingency of history as its end point. Is it not through the changes and chances of human life that spirit comes to know itself as itself and become what it is? Any historical emergence is a culmination, but is also at that moment dialectically overcome by its own internal trajectory of becoming. Somehow Kojève fails to account for this in his reading of Hegel. By accepting the premises that come along with Kojève's reading of Hegel's *Herr–Knecht* dialectic, "we understand the possibility of a historical process, of a history, which is, in its totality, the history of the fights and the work that finally ended in the wars of Napoleon and the table on which Hegel wrote the *Phenomenology*" (Kojève 1980: 43). Here is the birth of the contemporary myth of the end of history, in this very sentence. According to Kojève, with Hegel's world-historical interpretation of the actions of the revolutionary generation and the deeds of Napoleon, the distinction between masters and servants is overcome once and for all, and history ends – philosophically, politically, and morally.

Kojève's is thus both a breathtakingly comprehensive and stunningly selective vision of Hegel's philosophical goals. Kojève thematizes the end of history with absolute clarity; there can be no mistaking where the Hegelian end of history thesis begins for contemporary scholarship: "History stops at the moment that the difference, the opposition, between master and slave disappears," and "according to Hegel, it is in and by the wars of Napoleon and, in particular, the Battle of Jena, that this completion of history is realized through the dialectical overcoming (*Aufheben*) of both the master and the slave" (Kojève 1980: 43–44). The completion first arrives with the triumph of Napoleon over the monarchs of Europe, and it is shown to the world through Marx's declaration that communism is the means by which the workers – modern-day Hegelian *Knechte* – of the world unite and break their chains. Nietzsche and Engels write that Hegel *should* have declared the end of history, or that he felt *compelled* to complete history because of the unspoken demands of his system. For Kojève, the end of history is an accomplished *fact*, clearly outlined by Hegel. This means that the future is now, not proleptically realized, but actually realized, actual in the Hegelian sense of *Wirklichkeit* – the world of the liberated servant is the rational end of the trajectory of spiritual history. Both Koyré and Kojève "conclude that there is an unresolved contradiction in the philosophy of Hegel; it can only grant the future a priority over the other moments of time by *suspending* at once all future yet to come," according to Malabou (2005: 6). If this is true, Fukuyama is right to feel very uneasy about the world of the liberated servant, for it seems impossible that it will not evolve into the last man, picking through the ruins of empire and amusing itself to death. There is nowhere to go, the ἀγών which is the dialectical drive of the creative advance into novelty has stilled, and its cold engines gather dust in the darkness where no owl of wisdom takes flight.

Fortunately, none of this is so, nor could it ever truly be so. Gadamer points out the impossibility of such a suspension of the future when he discusses the difference between universal history and theological *Heilsgeschichte*. According to Gadamer (1996: 60–61), universal history

> indisputably is an aspect of the experience of our historical character. Just like all other history, however, universal history too always must be rewritten insofar as it does not possess its absolute datum as does *Heilsgeschichte*; and each projection of universal history has a validity that does not last much longer than the appearance of a flash momentarily cutting across the darkness of the future as well as of the past as it gets lost in the ensuing twilight.

Gadamer argues this against Hegel himself (accounting for the Hegelian "twilight" imagery), but the argument has an even greater piquancy used against Kojève, who forecloses on future possibility of spirit where Hegel does not. What Kojève attempts amounts to a Marxian *Heilsgeschichte* which undertakes

an apocalyptic unveiling of the truth behind the events of history, announcing the means of salvation available to mankind and requiring all faithful apostles to spread the good news – which explains without irony and without questioning its veracity the future course of Kojève's life, as he leaves professional philosophy and becomes a civil servant in the French Ministry of Economic Affairs and an architect of the European Union. At the end of history, all there is left to do is prepare for the coming of what is already immanent within the movement of life itself, and to make real in the here and now what has been accomplished within the hearts of all liberated servants. The fact has arrived, but the freedom must still be won; Kojève's is thus a quest for enlightenment, to "wake up" those who still slumber in the darkness of their benighted socio-economic conditions, and to help others realize that the freedom for which they dared never dream is in fact within them and all around them. The world has already changed – we must now change with it. Kojève's cry is an echo of Blake (1998 [1965]: 95–96):

> I will not cease from Mental Fight,
> Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand:
> Till we have built Jerusalem,
> In England's green & pleasant Land.

That a revolutionary must be a civil servant, wielding his pen like a sword, is the only avenue left for the thinker at the end of history.

Futural thinking remains, however. To be sure, Kojève believed that the freedom realized via the overcoming of the life and death struggle between *Herr* and *Knecht* must still be brought about within the concrete events of the future:

> Kojève points out that the End of History does not itself resolve the tension within the idea of equality … The Universal and Homogenous State – the consolidated global social and economic order – supposes some kind of stable synthesis between market "equivalence" and socialist equality of status. But it is not obvious, even to Kojève, when and how a permanent, stable, and universal (i.e., globally accepted) synthesis of this kind would come about. (Howse 2004:43)

Still, Kojève locates the end of history within the very fabric of Hegelian philosophy, and finds it at the heart of Hegel's first important public statement, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, finished (according to legend) the very day that Napoleon broke down the gates of Jena, thereby ending the 800-year history of the Holy Roman Empire and inaugurating the possibility of universal human freedom. It is a truly magnificent story; grand, thorough, and optimistic. The vicissitudes of the *actual* realization of the end of history lie ahead, in the futureless world of the liberated servant. By reinterpreting Hegel's philosophy through the lens of Marx's powerful vision of class struggle and social renewal,

Kojève was able to simultaneously resurrect a Hegelian system of thought that had been in serious decline in much of the intellectual world, and position himself as that system's most prescient spokesperson in the contemporary era. Hegel and Napoleon may have ended history, but it took Marx to make the end effective by purging it of its remaining parochial vestiges – religion and nationalism – and setting it on the road to true world-historical significance. Yet it was Kojève who clarified and popularized this particular Marxian reading of Hegel, and it is through Kojève that the end of history thesis enters into twentieth-century thought.

4.3 Kojève's end and Hegel's beginning

One must take the good with the bad in Kojève, without ever underestimating the depth of engagement with Hegel. By no means should his work on Hegel be rejected out of hand or his status as an influential interpreter of Hegelian philosophy be compromised. By virtue of his unrelenting focus on history, Kojève makes a compelling and crucial argument about the relevance of Hegel's political thought for the modern world. His *Introduction* is a powerful example of a serious thinker struggling with a complex and epochal text, and rewards careful study. Moreover, as Devlin (2004: xiii) argues, Kojève is a genuine philosopher in his own right, and not simply an idiosyncratic or appreciative commentator on Hegel's philosophy. Kojève, perhaps more than any other post-Nietzschean interpreter of Hegel's philosophy, takes seriously the limits of historical speculation; that is, Kojève reminds Hegel's readers that the *unglückliche Bewußtsein* is a statement about the inherently temporal nature of human existence, and not merely some psychological problem to be overcome. Gadamer may well be the only modern interpreter to take Hegel and the issue of time as seriously as Kojève does (with the possible exception of Derrida). Heidegger, for example, believed that time was unimportant for Hegel because Hegel was concerned only about the past (Heidegger *GA* 32:116). Because Heidegger believed that the work of the philosopher was to await the opening of Being, Hegel's concerns for the past could not have figured prominently in Heidegger's work. Gadamer is appreciative of many aspects of Kojève's work, but says that his understanding of Hegel and history is "not entirely convincing" (Gadamer 1976: 66) and is one of the "short-circuited applications" (Gadamer 1996: 56) of the Hegelian legacy. An emphasis on time in Hegel shows that in some sense history cannot continue indefinitely without some sort of resolution – this is one meaning of Hegel's statement in the *Enzyklopädie*, quoted by Kojève: "*Alles endliche ist dies, sich selbst aufzuheben*" ("Everything finite is its own suspension," Hegel *Werke* 8 §81). Kojève continues: "if conceptual understanding is dialectical, the existence of the Concept [*Begriff*] … is essentially finite. Therefore, history itself must be finite; collective man (humanity) must die just as the human

individual dies; universal history must have a definitive end" (Kojève 1980: 148). The question then arises, is the finite "end" Kojève identifies the same as the "end" envisioned by Hegel? The simple answer is "No." To the extent that Kojève ties the end of history to the outworking of the *Herr–Knecht* dialectic (and such a tie is so strong in Kojève's reading of Hegel as to constitute the entirety of Kojève's theory), Kojève completely misidentifies the character of the end which Hegel imagines. In point of fact, what Kojève calls the *end* of history, namely, the overcoming of the master by the servant and the attending realization of freedom via labor, is closer to the *beginning* of historical consciousness according to Hegel. The "I that is We, and We that is I" (Hegel *Werke* 3:145) is the dawn of the self-consciousness which gives rise to the *Herr–Knecht* dialectic, but it is also the ultimate *resolution* of that dialectic.

Hegel's model is a harmonious resolution, not an acrimonious triumph: "the identity of subject and predicate does not annihilate the difference between them, which the form of the proposition expresses, but rather their unity should emerge as a harmony" (*Werke* 3:59). Self-consciousness is not fulfilled in the overcoming of one player (the master) by another (the servant); rather, self-consciousness comes to know itself in the *Herr–Knecht* struggle. This dialectic, in the development of the *Phenomenology*, which for Kojève marks the high point in Hegel's account of human spirit, occurs in the text at the place where consciousness has moved from the safety of sense certainty into the conflicted realm of relationships. In other words, the *Herr–Knecht* dialectic marks a transition from purely subjective spirit (individual consciousness) to objective spirit (customs, morality, the laws of the human community), what John Findlay in his commentary on the *Phenomenology* calls "the complete penetration and lucidity of social intercourse" (Findlay 1977: 520). Accordingly, the *Herr–Knecht* dialectic cannot occupy the pride of place it has for Kojève in Hegel's philosophy, for the goal of spirit is not the transition from *subjective* to *objective* spirit, but the final resolution of *absolute* spirit, which for Hegel occurs in art, religion, and philosophy, in that order. The final result of the quest for self-consciousness inaugurated by the *Herr–Knecht* struggle is not the end of history but the Unhappy Consciousness, "the consciousness of the self as a split, merely contradictory being" (Hegel *Werke* 3:163). The contradiction which lies at the heart of the self is not overcome when one side succeeds in dominating the other, but in the realization that both aspects of the self contribute to a wholeness which is absolute; it is not the beyond-itself (*das Jenseits seiner selbst*), but rather the absolute in-itself (*das Ansichsein*), and the realization that this in-itself is a single individual consciousness, which allows the consciousness to return to itself (*Werke* 3:178). In the *Phenomenology*, this marks the transition from consciousness and self-consciousness (the realm of the *Herr–Knecht*, for example) to reason, and eventually spirit.

The combative relationship which the servant and master share is a mutual objectification which itself awaits a final resolution. Existentialist readings of the *Phenomenology* are closer to the mark than Kojève's Marxian interpretation of the *Herr–Knecht* dialectic, because they acknowledge that the human spirit embraces both the master and the servant in its relation to the world. The master and the servant are necessary components of a healthy, autonomous self, one which has undergone the struggle for recognition at its most primal level as a struggle for *self*-recognition. Gadamer's hermeneutical appropriation of Hegel's work is also more in keeping with the insights Hegel achieves in the *Herr–Knecht* dialectic. For example, Gadamer (1994: 14) points out that "To recognize one's own in the alien, to become at home in it, is the basic movement of spirit, whose being consists only in returning to itself from what is other." Hegelian spirit is always already a form of recognition, and the movement of overcoming or conflict which Kojève stresses is in fact only one part of the deeper realization of that recognition (in this case, re-cognition as Platonic ἀνάμνησις for both Gadamer and Hegel). According to Avineri (1972: 149):

> The historicity of needs and the development of civil society turn the minimum standard of living into a measure relative to prevailing conditions. The main problem of the poor is that while they cannot attain that which is considered as the minimum in their particular society, they nevertheless have felt the need to achieve this level. Civil society thus succeeds in internalizing its norms about consumption into the consciousness of its members even while it is unable to satisfy these norms.

The commodification of the standard of living becomes a fetish which is always already prior to any particular realization of this or any other standard. No reversal of the power structure between the master and the slave will overcome this problem. In fact, insofar as the slave owns its own labor and establishes its identity in terms of said ownership, it is trapped within the fetishism of consumer culture, regardless of who produces and for whom it is produced. Such commodified norms have to be externalized, shown to be what they are so that they may be dialectically challenged. Kojève's model reinforces the internalization of the norms of consumption, simply reversing the power dynamic without actually overcoming it or even questioning its assumptions. Kojève is right to stress the importance of recognition as an important hermeneutical key to the *Phenomenology*, but he is wrong to see the achievement of recognition in the *Herr–Knecht* struggle as being the *Endzweck* Hegel expected.

By focusing almost exclusively on the *Herr–Knecht* dialectic, Kojève all but guarantees that his interpretation of Hegel will run afoul of the overall system. The natural outcome of the *Herr–Knecht* dialectic is an impasse resulting in the *unglückliche Bewußtsein*, according to Hegel (Hegel *Werke* 3:163ff.), whereas for Kojève the dialectic is the triumph of the servant over the master. The master is enslaved finally by the servant (Kojève 1980: 29) – this

is faithful to Hegel's own understanding. But Kojève says that the servant is able to detach itself from the world in which it lives, for "Only the slave can transcend the given world … and not perish" (29). This idea has no warrant in Hegel's philosophy; it is Kojève's primary *saltus in demonstrando*. In Hegel's presentation of the dialectic (indeed, the very point of this stage of the dialectic), the master and the servant are ineluctably bound together, and the given world is formed by both roles being fulfilled. The given world is a world given by the interaction of masters and servants, doing what masters and servants do, that is, struggling for recognition within their roles as servant and served. The need to break the impasse between masters and servants is what drives the *Phenomenology of Spirit* forward at this very point, beyond the *Herr–Knecht* struggle, into the deeper impasse of the unhappy consciousness, and to the resolution of reason, religion, and finally into absolute knowing. Kojève clearly makes the choice to privilege the master–servant struggle for political reasons: it highlights his legitimately Marxian desire to change history via the development of the "working slave" (1980: 20). In making this interpretive choice, Kojève commits two crucial errors. One, he understands the servant (or the worker) to stand in the place of privilege (he does this in part by reifying Hegel's statement that "the truth of autonomous consciousness is therefore the consciousness of the servant," *Werke* 3:152). Second, Kojève sees the dialectic as beginning and ending with the master–servant relationship, leading to the primacy of the worker and the consummation of historical progress. This is perhaps faithful to Marx's "Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach" but it is hardly applicable to Hegel. The *Herr–Knecht* dialectic, in the structure of the *Phenomenology*, is prolegomena to the discussion of skepticism and the unhappy consciousness, and not the end product of human history. Kojève has confused "dialectical" with "teleological."

Self-consciousness is not marked by the eternal struggle of the master and the servant, nor is it completed when the master is overcome once and for all (as Kojève himself should have understood, since it was he who most clearly adduced the importance of finitude for history in Hegel). In the suspension of the dialectic, neither the master nor the servant remains as such. Rather, it is reason that overcomes the duality of the master and the servant, the realization that both master and servant constitute two sides of the unity that is the self (Hegel *Werke* 3:178). This unity is able to overcome the negativity and the self-conscious concern for freedom and independence, because "as reason, secure in itself, it is at peace with them and is able to endure them; it is certain that it is itself reality, or that everything actual is nothing less than itself; its thought is itself immediate reality, and its stance to the latter is that of Idealism" (*Werke* 3:179). In other words, both master and servant are suspended in a higher understanding of the self as *reasoned unity*, and not, as Kojève would have it, in a new will to power for the servant worker. Master

and servant are recognized for what they actually are: two sides of the same individual consciousness. According to Hegel, from the point of view of the unitary consciousness:

> [I]t is as if the world had only just now come into existence for it; previously, it did not understand the world … In grasping itself thus for the first time, after losing the grave of its own truth … it discovers the world as its own new world, which in its permanence holds an interest for it which previously was found only in its impermanence. (Hegel *Werke* 3:179)

This is hardly the end of history, taken literally or figuratively. If anything, the transcendence of *Herrschaft–Knechtschaft* marks the beginning of the first true autonomous phase of human history, for it is only after the human spirit has come to grips with the contradictions contained within its own depths, that it is able to meaningfully confront the contradictions in the world at large – a world that, as Hegel has it, is now experienced as *new* by the unitary self, and not at an end. Hegel begins autonomous human history at precisely the point at which Kojève ends it.

4.4 Whither the end of history?

One possible means of getting at the source of Kojève's brilliant misreading of Hegel is to understand it in terms of suffering, and the importance of suffering for Hegel's overall philosophical project. Notwithstanding his scant experience with Hegel's actual writings, Nietzsche understood Hegel well enough to see that Hegel was right to be concerned with suffering in history (and also well enough to be dismissive of Pollyannaish Hegelians such as Strauss and Hartmann). Nietzsche is also concerned with suffering and the way that humankind might respond to suffering, namely his *Untimely Meditations* as his own attempt at something like a theodicy. But for all his concern with political oppression and the birth of a newer, freer sense of the desiring self, a sense of suffering and its alleviation is missing from Kojève. That is, and despite appearances, Kojève's hermeneutical privileging of the *Herr–Knecht* dynamic is not a true concern that the suffering servant worker overcome the domineering master, at least not in an ethical sense. Against all likelihood, Kojève is not a philosopher of liberation – though Hegel and Nietzsche and Marx are, in their own ways. Kojève's liberation is only another form of domination, wherein the servant overcomes the master but the master does not itself reach fulfillment in this overcoming, as Hegel insists in the *Phenomenology* that it must. The nature of the dialectic is such that overcoming via suspension (*aufheben*) is an internal as well as an external process and thus no ontological or political distinction between subject and object, predicate and accident can be maintained: "Beginning with the subject, as though this ground had some permanence,

it finds that, since the substance and the predicate are in fact the same thing, the subject has passed over into the predicate, and thus has been suspended [*und hiermit aufgehoben*]" (Hegel *Werke* 3:58). Such a suspension is absent in Kojève's vision; the necessary interplay of lordship and bondage is eliminated from the dialectic, to be replaced (one assumes) by a collective of workers who project their material creations into a future that is always already ended. Kojève's is a vision of domination because it is a mere reversal of fortunes, a way to surmount the historical *Schlachtbank* or "slaughter-bench" (as Hegel memorably calls it) by anointing a new master. The servants become masters, thus the old masters become the new servants or are eliminated altogether. This is literally, linguistically, an *Endlösung*, not a futural dialectic.

Slavoj Žižek's reading of the Hegelian *Schlachtbank* in terms of the Christian notion of redemption is truer to Hegel than Kojève's notion, and is worth quoting in full:

> What this means is that, in a properly *historical* perspective as opposed to evolutionist historicism, the past is not simply past but bears within it its proper Utopian promise of a future Redemption: in order to understand a past epoch properly, it is not sufficient to take into account the historical conditions out of which it grew – one has also to take into account the Utopian hopes of a Future that were betrayed and crushed by it – that which was "negated," that which did not happen – so that the past historical reality was the way it was … Thus we are dealing not with idealist or spiritualist teleology, but with the dialectical notion of a historical epoch whose "concrete" definition has to include its crushed potentials, which were inherently "negated" by its reality. (Žižek 2008: 81)

Hegel's historical dialectic preserves and shelters the lures of feeling that result from the loss of meaning and failure of human desires, while catching them up into a larger whole. The dialectic goes forward not by eliminating troublesome ἀγών but by acknowledging the power of its friction and even its existential necessity. Hegel has caught no end of flack for his concept of history as a *Schlachtbank* but at least he can never be accused of suggesting some postmillennial vision of a golden future characterized by the absence of conflict and struggle. Hegel's preservation of ἀγών within the necessity of the dialectic is the key to understanding his otherwise bleak remarks about peaceful ages only occupying history's blank pages (Hegel *VPW* 92), and stands as a repudiation of Kojève's reduction of the internal conflict of the dialectic to an economic model of proletarians breaking the chains of their bourgeoisie overlords. Žižek (himself a Marxian philosopher) is right; in a tour de force of close reading, he insists that the very strength of the historical dialectic lies in its preservation of what is crushed beneath it. What *happens* is as much a result of what *did not happen* as anything else – the suspension of the negative is not the elimination of all difference. It is not too much to say that Kojève's reading of the *Herr–Knecht* relation is an example of the sort of thinking Hegel condemns in

the *Phenomenology* as the "vanity of the negative," which "expresses not only that its content is vain, but also that this insight itself is the negative, which is unable to catch sight of the positive within itself" (Hegel *Werke* 3:56–57). Kojève's doctrine of the *Herr–Knecht* relation ends with a negative overcoming of the impotent master, and only finds the positivity of the liberated servant beyond this negative overcoming. Such a dichotomy of political triumph belies the power and "restlessness" of the negative, as Jean-Luc Nancy calls it. Beyond and within the negative itself, the dialectic continues and becomes what it is. "Not the life which cowers before death and keeps itself unsullied from depredation, but rather that life which bears it and nourishes itself within it [*das ihn erträgt und in ihm sich erhält*] – this is the life of the spirit" (Hegel *Werke* 3:36). Yet none of this is preserved in Kojève's reading.

To make the interpretive moves Kojève makes is to profoundly misunderstand Hegel's use of the *Herr–Knecht* dialectic – and for Hegel it is a *true* dialectic because in it both parties achieve a higher resolution which pushes them forth into a future world of possibilities that are very real. Nothing dialectical could serve as an end of anything, properly understood. Indeed, Hegel's "notion of history's end and philosophy's completion present closure and completion not as terminal finality but as inseparable from dynamic openness" (Maker 2009: 16). The *Herr–Knecht* dialectic is the beginning, the start of a long historical process of striving for freedom, which is still ongoing and must remain a futural project according to the Hegelian account of history. The *Herr–Knecht* dialectic is a phenomenological model of how that striving takes place, not an actual description of an activity in time which can be tied to any given historical occurrence. Nearly all post-Hegelian accounts of the end of history make the mistake of identifying this or that historical event as the end of history as such, but this is merely what Whitehead called the fallacy of misplaced concrescence, namely, "the accidental error of mistaking the abstract for the concrete" (Whitehead 1967: 51). Kojève commits this fallacy when he ascribes the end of history to Hegel and locates it first in the wars of Napoleon (Kojève 1980: 44) and then in Marx's realms of freedom and necessity (159). Kojève's follower Francis Fukuyama commits the fallacy when he locates this end in the triumph of liberal democracy and market capitalism following the end of the Soviet era in Russia and Eastern Europe (Fukuyama 1992). Fukuyama is only one of several political historians who continue to attribute the end of history thesis to Hegel, although he has distanced himself from the political and military uses of that idea as they have manifested themselves in the neoconservative movement in the United States and elsewhere (Fukuyama 2004, 2006). But even so great a historian of the state as Philip Bobbitt claims that Hegel ended history with the rise of the nation state (Bobbitt 2002: 6, 215). Bobbitt's belief that history "might have gone differently" (2002: 826) at any one of its great junctures is closer to Hegel's historical thought than he is aware, though Hegel

does believe in discernible historical patterns that Bobbitt rejects. Historical events be further *developments* in the realization of autonomous freedom, but they are not the *end point* of the development of that freedom; that is, there is no prima facie reason why some better (or worse) model could not arise that would replace the seeming current hegemony of liberal democracy. Hegel is quick to remind us that philosophers are not prophets, they cannot tell us what must be, only what is and has been (Hegel *VPW* 210). Kojève and Fukuyama presume to tell us what the future must hold, since the march of God in history has reached its destination. For this reason, Kojève sees the *Herr–Knecht* dynamic as Hegel's great contribution to philosophical history, and why it must stand as the end of history: the dynamic is ongoing, and when the servant achieves mastery and the chains of servitude are broken, history has reached its grand/final conclusion/solution. Whatever this reading of history is, it is not and never was Hegel's reading.

Kojève's end of history thesis, unlike the ones presented by Nietzsche and Engels, works from both inside and outside the larger Hegelian system. Recall that both Nietzsche and Engels found the end of history a necessary implication within Hegel's philosophy. For all their varied hostility to Hegel's thought, they were at least willing to allow Hegel to have the last word on what his system meant (or, in both cases, what it *should* have meant). Finding the untenable claim to have witnessed the end of history built into the fabric of Hegelian thought, Nietzsche and Engels, in their own ways, and for their own reasons, rejected Hegel's thought and developed their own theories about history and humanity, in large part to correct the impressions imparted by Hegelian philosophy to their own generation's thinkers and leaders. Kojève approaches the end of history in quite a different way. He does not find it merely implied within the Hegelian system – for Kojève, the stated purpose of Hegelian thought, centered in the *Phenomenology*, is to announce the end of history and the triumph of the worker. Kojève does not deal in implications or in second-guessing. He thematizes that which both Nietzsche and Engels understood to be latent in Hegel's own thought. At the same time, Kojève praises that which Nietzsche and Engels condemned. Yet Kojève's reasons for applauding Hegel's account of history are not strictly historical: Kojève, as all interpreters, brings an agenda to his *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, and this is natural and not to be condemned. Unlike Nietzsche and Engels, Kojève embraces the overtures Hegel seems to make towards the end of history. It is not unfair to ask, however, how faithful Kojève's reading of Hegel is, especially because Kojève's reading has been the most influential in terms of spreading the idea that Hegel believed that history had ended in his own time and with his own thought. The answer to this question, however, must be that Kojève was simply wrong about the end of history in Hegel. However interesting, useful, and provocative his interpretation of Hegel is, it cannot be and should not be confused with

Hegel's own thoughts. Kojève is not a faithful guide to Hegel's understanding of historical suffering (something Kojève does not himself discuss at length), nor is his account of Hegel's use of desire particularly convincing; unlike suffering, desire looms large in Kojève's reading of Hegel. Kojève's statement that "all action is negating" (1980: 4) in the outworking of desire is not faithful to Hegel's actual philosophy. Kojève overlooks that self-consciousness has a "double object" – one is the given object of sense-certainty and this is negative. But the other is itself, consciousness of itself, i.e. *self*-consciousness, which is the "true essence" of the relationship, and is affirming (Hegel *Werke* 3:139). Therefore all action is not negating, and it is false to Hegel to construct a dualism between the negative and positive aspects of self-consciousness. (See *Werke* 3:143–45 for Hegel's analysis of desire in the *Phenomenology*, especially his statement that "it is in fact something other than self-consciousness which is the essence of desire" [*Werke* 3:143].) And finally, Kojève's account of history as the struggle of masters and servants is demonstrably flawed. Yet, if Kojève's theory (namely, Hegel's end of history thesis rests upon the account of masters and servants found in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*) is not faithful to Hegel's own intentions or even Hegel's own words, what becomes of the end of history thesis?

It vanishes. Alexandre Kojève's reading is a good example of what happens when the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is given too much emphasis in any exegesis of Hegel. To base the entirety of Hegelian philosophy of history on the opening third of Hegel's first major publication, and to overlook the role of history not only in the remainder of the book, but in the rest of Hegel's output (including published books and later lecture compilations) is to paint a highly idiosyncratic picture of Hegel's idea of history, to be charitable. And there are more than exegetical reasons to look beyond the *Phenomenology* for the meaning of Hegelian philosophy. For example, Gadamer argues that it was Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik* and not the *Phenomenology* which exercised the greatest influence in the nineteenth century. It is all the more unfortunate that one of Kojève's greatest legacies was to leave the impression with subsequent generations that the 1806 work was more important than it actually is. To be sure, it contains the seeds of the later philosophy, and Haym was being only slightly hyperbolic when he declared that "he understands Hegelian philosophy who is master of the full sense" of the Preface of the *Phenomenology* (Haym 1962 [1857]: 215) – though recall that Hegel in that Preface says that those who *only* read "prefaces and first paragraphs" (Hegel *Werke* 3:65) are unfit for the full weight of the dialectic of the concept. Gadamer (1976: 75) rightly characterizes the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as "a kind of anticipation of what was to come in which Hegel tried to summarize the whole of his philosophy from a certain point of view." Gadamer, who is in a position to speak authoritatively, also points out that Heidegger

is another thinker responsible for the *Phenomenology*'s eclipse of the *Logik* in the twentieth century.

Hegel never claims that his philosophy represents the end of history, that is, the final point of the advance of the freedom of spirit. Neither of the two most important and influential sources for this claim in the nineteenth century, Nietzsche and Engels, represents Hegel as actually saying any such thing, though they do find the idea deeply ingrained within his overall philosophy of history. This in itself is a serious accusation, and even though it has been shown that neither Nietzsche nor Engels is able to demonstrate any hard claim on Hegel's part to have inaugurated the end of history, the idea that somehow Hegel's entire system *must* include within it a clear end cannot be easily swept aside. The only way to fairly adjudicate this broader claim, however, is to turn to what Hegel actually did and did not say about history. However, it has been the argument of Part I that the actual Hegelian claim that history has ended is traceable to very clear non-Hegelian sources, whether or not Hegel's overall philosophy implies it. The two earliest primary sources, Nietzsche and Engels, are the most compelling because they are the most abstract. That is, they raise the question of Hegel's intent rather than his results, a question that has yet to be taken up in this study. The most important contemporary source for the end of history myth in Hegel, however, is undoubtedly Kojève's study of Hegel from the 1930s and the subsequent influence this study has had on generations of Hegel interpreters and continues to have today. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, Kojève's explicit claims about Hegel's end of history are much less problematic for Hegel than the more abstract claims of Nietzsche and Engels, for Kojève, however fascinating his theories may be, claims too much and in so doing, manages to prove nothing: *qui nimium probat, nihil probat*. In fact, despite the reality that Kojève's work is directly responsible for the long life of the end of history myth in the contemporary period, if the claim to an end of history was founded only on a reading of Kojève's work, it is impossible to believe that people would still be talking about Hegel and the end of history. There must be more to the problem. What is it about Hegel's own thought, apart from the meanings that Nietzsche, Engels, and Kojève find in it, that lends credence to the idea that history has ended, and that the post-Hegelian world is a world devoid of truly world-historical significance? If Nietzsche, Engels, and Kojève are wrong about the end of history, what keeps the idea alive? This question, and a re-examination of the very idea of a philosophy of history, is the subject of Part II of this study.

Part II

Hegel and the philosophy of history

No philosophical saying has earned more gratitude from narrow-minded governments and scorn from equally narrow-minded liberals than Hegel's famous statement, "All that is real is rational; all that is rational is real."

Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*

That is free which is not connected with or dependent on another.

G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*

5 Herder and history

> What characterizes and marks out the nineteenth century, therefore, is not the discovery of historical thinking as such, but the new direction which it takes. Indeed, there is here a peculiar reversal, a sort of "Copernican revolution," which gave the science of history a new form. Just as Kant wanted to be regarded as the Copernicus of philosophy, so Herder may be called the Copernicus of history.
>
> Ernst Cassirer, *The Problem of Knowledge*, 1950

5.1 Herder and the philosophy of history

The discussion in Part I of this study began, as it were, *in medias res*, with the immediate aftermath of Hegelian philosophy and the works of philosophers such as Schelling, Nietzsche, and Marx. This investigation was necessary in preparation for a serious consideration of Hegel's actual pronouncements upon history and philosophy. However, one cannot really appreciate Hegel's philosophy of history apart from the antecedent discussions of German philosophy, especially in Kantian and post-Kantian thought. Rather than attempting a broad summary of the entire sweep of this trend in German philosophy, the next few chapters will engage two of the thinkers who exerted an influence upon the generation of intellectuals to which Hegel belonged, Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), and Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814). Fichte was only a little older than Hegel himself but forms perhaps the most important philosophical bridge between the great *Critique*s of Kant and the philosophical synthesis of Hegel. Fichte adopted Jacobi's attack on Kantian "nihilism" (reliance upon reason and the elimination of faith) and Reinhold's defense of Kantian *Elementarphilosophie* to his own ends, impressing or infuriating Romantics such as Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, Hölderlin, and Schelling, who in turn were decisive early influences on Hegel, particularly the latter two. Herder was a younger contemporary of Kant's and played an important role in the development of German Romanticism and, later, the concept of nationalism

(Barnard 1964: 197–99; Ergang 1966: 49–50).[1] Herder's bearing on this study is important as an early proponent for that mix of Germanism, Enlightenment, and Romanticism that was so potent for thinkers of Hegel's time. "In Germany the reaction against the *Aufklärung* with its overemphasis on rationalism … took three main forms: the reassertion of Hamann, Lavater, and Jacobi of faith in contrast to reason, the critical philosophy of Kant, and the movement led by Herder" (Spitz 1955: 453). Herder's contribution to this reaction, and its bearing on the philosophy of history, is my subject in this chapter.

Herder's seminal contributions to the philosophy of history have direct bearing upon Hegel's own thoughts about history and philosophy. Of particular note is Herder's genetic method of comprehending history by tracing the cultural genesis of its events (Barnard 2003: 121–25). As would be expected, Herder's writings on the philosophy of history were well known to Hegel, and to Fichte, and in an important way both men reacted to Herder's philosophy as well as to Kant's. Herder's genetic method of understanding history influenced Schelling as well as Hegel and Fichte, since "all three agreed with Herder that characteristic human activities are the products of culture, and that to understand them is to trace their genesis in history" (Beiser 2006: 145). However, this agreement must not obscure the very real methodological differences between the three. For his part, Hegel hews closer to Herder on the centrality of *particular* cultures in history, while agreeing with Fichte that there must be *transcendental* means by which their development can be understood. Though Herder was critical of Kant's philosophical project, Herder's philosophy of history partook in the overall critique of overarching metaphysics and limiting skepticism inaugurated by Kant. According to Charles Taylor (1975: 34), "Herder saw in the transcendental exploration of Kant only another theory which divided the subject. Kant for his part was snooty about Herder's philosophy of history, and seems to have felt little attraction to this powerful statement of the expression theory." But in rejecting the transcendental idealism of Kant's first *Critique*, Herder goes beyond Kant, while remaining a perspectivist. As Sikka (2007: 32) points out, "whereas Kant's rejection of metaphysics is directed only at the possibility of gaining knowledge of things beyond the perceptible world, Herder also rules out the possibility of achieving a position from which one

[1] Herder likely coined the term "nationalism" in his work *Yet Another Philosophy of History for the Education of Mankind* (1774): "Thus any two nations whose inclinations or circles of happiness collide are named 'prejudiced!' 'riffraff!' 'narrow nationalism!' [*eingeschränkten Nationalism*]" (Herder *SW* 5:510). However, the term and the use to which it is put are not always the same thing. Gellner's definition, "the organization of human groups into large, centrally educated, culturally homogenous units" (1983: 35) approximates Herder's meaning, or what Smith (1986: 235) calls a "cultural heritage … for ethnic identity and survival," remembering that Herder does not privilege any particular ἔθνος – Herder's nationalism is cultural and linguistic, not explicitly racial. See also Löchte's discussion (2005: 79–81) on the four "semantic fields" of meaning in Herder's *Volk*- and *Nationsbegriff*.

could speak, as Kant does, of the universal structure of our experience and its objects." Sikka draws a direct and fruitful comparison between Herder's critique of Kant, and Heidegger's critique of Husserl. For her, Herder's work is a perspectival critique of metaphysics with great affinities to Heidegger's later assessment of the Western metaphysical tradition. Only particular points of view, derived from experience, can be the basis for speculation about the world, and this is the ultimate basis for Herder's grasp of history, his contribution to *Frühromantik*, and his discussion of *Nationalismus*.

What made Herder's ideas concerning history so powerful in their time was the autonomy Herder granted the striving of the human will in the development of human culture. Unlike Voltaire's *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations* (1756), which understands philosophy of history as a "philosophy of culture" (Rosenthal 1955: 151), a linear account of the accomplishments of humanity as it clawed its way up from savagery to civilization, Herder believed that a philosophical account of history showed that each epoch must be judged on its own merits, not under the all-seeing eye of the reason of French *philosophes* such as Voltaire and Diderot. Voltaire's *Essai sur les moeurs* is a painstaking account of a huge amount of human history up to his time, and contains many genuine historical, cultural, and philosophical insights. He pays close attention to actual history – but only in order to show that modern culture is a moral and spiritual advance over primitive humanity. On the other hand, for Herder, reason has its place in the account of history, but it is invoked in order to show the designs of providence as it works out its will *within* the vicissitudes of history, and not *apart from* them. There is in Herder's program an important component of Hegel's own philosophy of history, though Hegel will try to take the inscrutable will of providence (which for Herder personifies as "right, prudence, virtue, and fate," *SW* 24:329) and account for it in explicit and speculative terms – something that Herder could not sanction, as it claimed for reason something unavailable to it, namely, the ability to peer behind the transcendental workings of the historical trajectory. Above all, Herder's philosophy sets the stage for every subsequent philosophical appraisal of history in nineteenth-century German thought, and as such is an apt place to begin. Only by confronting Herder can one understand the place of actual human history with all its vicissitudes in Hegel's philosophy of history.

Herder's influence and importance in the history of ideas is far greater than his general name recognition would indicate. Though well known to scholars of German intellectual history, his contributions to the trajectory of historical thought ultimately culminating in the famous writings of Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche is generally overlooked. Indeed, well-known movements such as the *Sturm und Drang* would be unthinkable without his work on German literature, and Herder is rightly considered the "father" of German Romanticism, due in part to his early exposure to the thought of

Johann Georg Hamann, Herder's mentor at the University of Königsberg. Yet as the General Superintendent at Weimar from 1776, Herder also played an important role in the revival of Classicism in German intellectual circles. Jan Patočka (1989: 172) argues for including Herder with the Enlightenment, "since in the spirit of the Enlightenment he did not separate nature and history." Thus Herder stands as an Enlightenment "anti-Enlightenment" critic, one who was profoundly influential on the coming generation of Romantics, but who never sat easily within either epoch. Though his magnum opus, the incomplete *Ideas for the Philosophy of History of Humanity* (1784–91), is his most important statement on the matter of philosophy and history, many earlier works exist which lay out aspects of his thinking on the relatively new field of philosophy of history. Rather than attempting a full account of this, Herder's largest Weimar-era work, this chapter will be restricted to issues in Herder's philosophy which bear directly upon Hegel's own work, particularly the limits of philosophical inquiry into history, the aims and goals of history, and what Sikka (2011) calls Herder's "enlightened relativism" in treating each historical society as an end in itself. I turn first to Herder's response to the works of the French *philosophes* such as Diderot and Voltaire, his 1774 *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit.* Here, Herder opposes two separate themes in contemporary historical enquiry, namely, the idea that human history is a tale of upward perfection, and the antithetical view that history is nothing more than a chaotic collection of events with no discernible purpose or harmony. These will be important themes for Hegel as well, though he will part ways with Herder on how one should understand them.

5.2 Particularity and progress

Not surprisingly, Voltaire is an important early figure in the Enlightenment's engagement with the philosophy of history. He argued for an interpretation of history based upon the putative homogeneity of humanity, among its vast welter of culture and its warring sets of ideological commitments: "Everything which is intimately connected with human nature is the same, from one end of the universe to the other; everything dependent upon habit is different … Human nature, however, extends over it a certain unity, for it sets up everywhere a small number of immutable principles" (Voltaire *ŒI* 1:197). Voltaire's concept of a generalized human nature, shared in various ways with other eighteenth-century thinkers such as Rousseau and Montesquieu, is representative of a sort of metaphysical essentialism; history is that which is literally μετὰ τὰ φυσικὰ – beyond the individual, physical, or particular. No matter their racial, cultural, or societal differences, human beings are essentially one and should be studied as such. Naturally, the outcome of such a study was all but

a foregone conclusion for Voltaire and his ilk; with the publication of their *Encyclopédie* (1751–72), *philosophes* Diderot and d'Alembert demonstrated the Enlightenment belief in the ability of human reason to penetrate and classify all aspects of knowledge. Voltaire's philosophy of history, as a complete account of human mores, culture, and "spirit," was just such an attempt at complete knowledge. Differences in what Voltaire calls "habit" must be glossed over in order to get at the kernel of humanity which underlies the seeming pandemonium of human culture. Thus, to say that Voltaire's philosophy of history is a philosophy of culture is not to say that it is anthropological, in the sense of paying close attention to the manifestations of culture in human societies. Rather, one should say that Voltaire and the *philosophes* were concerned with culture only to the extent that culture could be seen as single human creation, towards which all of humanity aimed and in which all participated in spite of their seeming differences. That contemporary French Enlightenment thinking represented the apex of this monolithic human culture was all but taken for granted. Even "anti-Enlightenment" Enlightenment thinkers such as Rousseau held to this single human nature hypothesis, though in Rousseau's case the apex of the one human culture was to be located in the dim past of humanity's noble savagery. Yet Rousseau was a seminal social contract thinker, not a simple Romantic primitivist (Lovejoy 1923), and never actually used the term "noble savage" (*le bon sauvage*). In fact, the term first appears in the work of John Dryden (1631–1700), "I am as free as nature first made man, / Ere the base laws of servitude began, / When wild in woods the noble savage ran" (Dryden 1978 XI:22). The association with Rousseau is owed in large part to Voltaire's accusation that Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* was a call for humanity to return to an animalistic state. Voltaire caustically remarked in a letter to Rousseau that reading the *Discourse* made him long to walk on all fours ("*Il prend envie de marcher à quatre pattes, quand on lit votre ouvrage*," Rousseau *CG* 2:236).

From an enlightened point of view, then, once one has got one's head around the overall notion of generalized human nature, one is in a position to attempt an account of the various actual *histoires* involved in the great span of human existence. The Many are manifestations of the One – Enlightenment universality must always take precedence over local particularity. Furthermore, the One is to be understood as preferable to any of its manifestations, all of which are primitive particular events in the grand sweep of human rational progress. A teleology of progress and unity is a defining theme of *les philosophes*. Note, however, that this is not the same as Aristotle's claim in *Politics* 1253a20 that "the whole must be prior to the part," nor does it resemble his teleological communitarianism. The entire *τέλος* of human endeavor takes place within the *πόλις* for Aristotle, without any great claim to universal knowledge or historical fulfillment. In this, Hegel is closer to Aristotle in that for both, spirit comes to

be what it is through the concrete manifestation of human life within the specific community (this is at the heart of what Pinkard [1996] terms the "sociality of reason" in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*), whereas Voltaire is something of a Platonist, searching for the formal key to history behind the shifting events and primitive practices of early man. Even Hegel's closest approximation to this, his *List der Vernunft* or "cunning of reason," is less a hidden hand or guiding principle than a working out of the concrete effects of very human decisions within a very human history. This is not the scheme of the universe envisioned by the *philosophes* of Herder's day, of course. For them, and in line with the deist thinking espoused by many of the most influential of them, including Voltaire, the regularity and uniformity of the world made its clarity unmistakable to the trained eye of reason. With this, at least, Hegel was in agreement. The Enlightenment *philosophes* were Hegelian system builders without Hegelian historical limits and without the internal workings of the dialectic.

Herder's work on history represents a definitive break from this sort of thinking about history, and influences all important subsequent treatments of the subject. Herder's entire philosophical project on history is an attempt to overthrow the idea that history is some monolithic and inevitable thrust towards the future perfection of the human race.

> To assume that human destiny is forever marching forward in giant steps; to believe that depravity is a necessary precondition for improvement and order; to argue that there must be shadow in order that there be light, that to unravel the knot of events it must first be tied, that to produce a clear nectar, fermentation must first remove the impurities; these were the assumptions which aroused Herder's ire against what he called the "pet philosophy" of his century. (Barnard 1969: 40)

Even later thinkers such as Hegel, who in idiosyncratic ways will resurrect the Enlightenment notion of completeness and oneness, find it impossible to gloss over the particulars of history, be these particulars religious (the great *bête noire* of the secular *philosophes*), economic, social, artistic, intellectual, geographical, or any of a host of human differences. Human cultures, human histories in the plural, exist only insofar as they are manifestations of particular combinations of events and desires, and cannot be relegated to mere versions of a single, overarching human nature which finds itself brought into being in the multifarious societies of the human family. Herder's contribution to the development of the appreciation of the actual varieties of human history cannot be overstated. "Since Herder's time all historians and philosophers have taken this proposition [i.e. that human cultures must be understood from within their own context] for granted, usually without knowing that Herder was the first to state it" (Clark 1955: 191). Herder's assault on the hubris of Enlightenment philosophy of history comes first and most clearly in his 1774 essay *Yet Another Philosophy of History for the*

Education of Mankind, a statement on the limits of reason in providing historians the key with which to understand humanity in historical terms.

Herder begins with a statement about the apparent inevitability of locating the "single origin of the entire human race" (Herder *SW* 5:477) with the aid of human reason, given the undeniable advances human thought has made up to his own time. He then outlines a supposed history of human progress beginning with the Egyptians, then the Greeks and Phoenicians, and ending with the Romans, who were the bearers of the light of human reason until the Empire collapsed under the weight of barbarian incursions and the Western world was plunged into the "superstitious night" of the medieval period. Throughout this highly compressed history, however, Herder is quick to point out that "It was never the Romans' primary concern to compete with the Greeks, Phoenicians, Egyptians, or Orientals; but by putting all that came before them to manly use – what a Roman world they brought about!" (*SW* 5:500). The Romans, in other words, had less consciousness of being the heirs of those who came before them, so much as they thought of themselves as *Romans*, people bound up with the needs, concerns, and hopes of the society which bred them. However, later historians account for the Romans and others, for themselves, they were Romans, or Greeks, or Britons, and nothing else. Societies have to be understood from their own points of view, "from within" as far as this is possible, and a philosophy of history will be an account of the rise and fall of these particularities from a single point of view, "subordinated to a single measure – it is at this point that a philosophy of history came to be" (*SW* 24:328). A single measure exists by which to judge the cultural nuances of any given historical expression, but it is as it were a phenomenological measure, one that must take the changes and chances of history seriously, not as mere fluctuations in a monolithic edifice, if it is to account for events in an organized way.

Herder's method of focusing on the particular is his way of dealing with unhelpful and inaccurate generalizations about human nature and the progress of history: "No one in the world feels the shortcomings of generalized characterizations more than I do," he writes. "In the end, the many are still summed up in nothing but a generalized term, which each individual perhaps thinking and feeling what he will – O incomplete means of portrayal, how much one may misunderstand!" (*SW* 5:500–1). For Herder, it is not the general, but the particular, that is the key to comprehending human history. Herder turns on his own earlier portrayal of the sweep of human history from east to west, the Egyptians to the Romans, which represents for him the Enlightenment attempt at locating a single human nature, with open scorn. History must be grasped in its particularities, or not at all. To be sure, Herder never goes so far as to deny the existence of an overall plan per se, located for him always in some loose construal of divine providence. But unlike thinkers such as Voltaire who wish

to understand the nature of humanity through reason alone and at the same time jettison the superstitious particularities of an earlier age, Herder keeps the idea of divine providence and the contingencies of human history in an uneasy tension, believing that even though the hand of God (Herder usually refers obliquely to *Schicksal* or fate) is evident in the movement of history, never once does it transgress the autonomy of individual societies, cultures, and peoples: "Humankind remains humankind – though a design of progress becomes visible – this is my grand theme!" (*SW* 5:511). In fact, with characteristic gusto, Herder declares, "Character of the nations! Only the data of their constitution and history must determine it" (*SW* 5:503). Herder walks a fine but very distinct line between three different notions of human history: one, the Enlightenment idea that progressive reason is the key to history; two, the religious notion that history is the plan of God or divine providence; and three, the nascent Romantic claim that history is the movement of the national spirit of a people. Herder embraces all three of these, as Hegel also will, without ever allowing one of them to dominate the project of the other two. The third of these, however, is the one most often associated with Herder, in the form of nationalism. This is true, though it is an inadequate explanation of Herder's *overall* comprehension of history.

Herder's reputation as the father of nationalism stems, in part, from his insistence that grandiose philosophical accounts, which attempt a priori deductions about the progress and purposes of human history, are inadequate not only in their methods, but also in their concrete accounts of the societies with which they deal. History is and must be the tale of nations. Herder agrees with the Enlightenment attempt to achieve a secular and rational account of human existence, but only Herder's is truly *saecularis*, "of the age" in question. Nations, peoples – these are the true objects of empirical historical inquiry and practical philosophical speculation. "In a sense, then, human perfection is national, secular, and viewed even more precisely, individual. Humankind builds nothing unless the age, climate, needs, world, or fate provide the impetus," and no one will bridle at such an assertion, given that they correctly grasp the nature of historical enquiry, except the one "who has enough philosophy to want to find the entire world in a single place" (Herder *SW* 5:506). All that one will find in a particular spot is a particular instance of human history. Herder's statement of historical particularity may be summed up in his unequivocal statement, that "each nation has the center of happiness within itself, as each sphere has its center of gravity" (*SW* 5:509). Hegel could assent to this, in his own way. Voltaire never could. To seek to overcome historical particularity by asserting a generalized human nature which emerges in this or that society is to ignore the very thing that makes human society and culture interesting and valuable, namely, its individual national character. Neither the twentieth century's violent focus on nationalism as a racial matter nor the twenty-first century's

vacuous preoccupation with diversity as an ethnic *Identitätspolitik* are akin to Herder's notion of national particularity. Herder's "concept of nature was not biological and scientific (or rather pseudo-scientific), but metaphysical and moral. His nationalism can only be understood within its conceptual context of enlightened humanitarianism and rational morality" (Kohn 2005 [1944]: 430). Herder's emphasis on particularity and, especially, individuality, was crucial for the development of early Romanticism – when a young Goethe encountered Herder's writings in 1770, works like *Götz von Berlichingen* and *Werther* were the result.

The Enlightenment search for linear forward progress also comes in for Herder's censure. The idea that history can and should represent the progress of humanity seems intuitive, for there are, in fact, aspects of human history that represent some amount of progress, be that progress judged in technological, political, spiritual, economic, or intellectual terms. Yet in the wake of Herder and, later, the Romantic critique of the Enlightenment, such claims have become more muted, or more strident, depending on whether one feels that the Romantic reaction represents a needed tonic to the hubris of human advancement, or that the Enlightenment project is unfinished but fundamentally the right way to go about things (Jürgen Habermas is a good contemporary proponent of this latter view). In any event, the form in which the Enlightenment *philosophes* presented the story of human history was an undisguised tableau of advancement upon advancement (with the notable exception, in a sense, of Rousseau). Herder maintains with many of the historical thinkers who preceded him that the study of history as a philosophical matter implicated the study of history with the quest for truth. Yet he does not believe that the universal truth comes at the expense of the smaller "truths" which go to make it up. The truth of progress is not, as Voltaire and others would have it, a single trajectory from barbarity to enlightenment (nor is it, as Rousseau teaches, an equally straight falling away from savage civility to civilized savagery). Rather, Herder locates truth *within* the changes of history; the details of history are where the waypoints of truth may be found, pointing the way to further changes, some for the better, some for the worse, depending upon perspective and point of view.

"Perfections are developed through shortcomings," Herder writes. "Providence herself … wished to attain to her purpose only in change itself, by advancement through the awakening of novel powers and the extinction of others" (Herder *SW* 5:507). Herder's notion that change or the advancement into novelty itself represented progress is a radical idea, for however much change might be lauded as the agent of progress by atheist and theist alike, it is usually a guided change, a change which is shepherded along by whatever motivating forces are believed to move history (the hand of God, the hand of the market, the blind change of evolution, or any other force one wishes to put forward). Herder was himself not averse to asserting that a hand guided the

change of history – what he objected to were claims to know the *mechanism* of that change, especially if that mechanism was reducible to human reason. "Philosopher in Earth's Nordic vale, you who hold the child-sized scale of your century in your hand, do you know more than providence?" (*SW* 5:507). In part, Herder's insistence on human ignorance of the overall mechanism of human progress is a continuation of his earlier critique of Kant's transcendental idealism as well as the cruder claims of absolute knowledge represented by the *philosophes* of his time – the truth must reside somewhere between the opacity of the *Ding an sich*, the sovereignty of the transcendental unity of apperception, and the transparency of the *philosophes*. There can be no privileged position from which to speak about history, and claims about progress cannot be measured against what has come before. Rather, progress is an inner movement of a culture, and can be understood only from within the perspective of human history. There can be only specific positions from which one speaks, always aware that one's pronouncements are "child-sized" and bounded within a temporal horizon.

To make this point, Herder addresses a favorite topic of the Enlightenment, the idea of happiness or human flourishing. As a ruler for measuring human progress, happiness as human fulfillment has been understood in teleological terms ever since Aristotle's work. If happiness is the goal of human life, it would seem that the pertinent question would be, where is the greatest happiness to be located, when did it arise, when did it flourish, or has it yet come about? Locating this, one could feel certain of having found the highest point to which humanity had progressed, assuming that this was the correct yardstick with which to measure human history. Such assumptions and metrics measure just the sort of linear progress Herder rejects. He says,

> A learned society of our day, no doubt with noble purpose, once presented the question, "Which people in history was the happiest of all?" If I understand the question correctly … I do not know how to answer, save to say that in a particular time, and under particular circumstances, such a point of time eventually would arrive for every people – or that there never was such a time. (Herder *SW* 5:508–9)

In other words, happiness is a condition decided upon and arrived at (or not) by a certain people in a certain period of time for very certain societal reasons. There is nothing at all universal in such an analysis of human life. Some human societies might prefer war as the natural state of happiness, others peace, others peace with prosperity, still others peace with only sufficient means. Some might call satisfaction the ownership of great lands, others, to dwell in safety with their neighbors. Thus Herder must reject Hobbes's famous claim that humanity exists in a constant state of *bellum omnium contra omnes* when it finds itself without a social contract (Hobbes, *De cive* 1.12; *Leviathan* I.xiii.9). In fact, Herder's ideas place him firmly within the organic Aristotelian vision of

societies, if not quite going so far as limiting the movement of human history to the local *πόλις*.

Another way to understand this would be to say that every society's specific operation and historical trajectory is itself the "contract" under which the society lives and becomes what it is, as long as the "contract" in question is not seen as ad hoc and artificial. There exists no transcendental yardstick with which to measure the happiness of the Egyptians save the yardstick they themselves employed, and so with the Greeks, the Romans, or any other nation or peoples. Viewed in this way, one could at best say when the *Egyptians* were happiest, or the *Mayans*, or perhaps the *Danes*, given a finite set of temporal circumstances (even assuming one could make blanket statements about an internally diverse social group). But for Herder there can be no discussion of the overall progress of humanity through the long sweep of history in terms of quantifiable happiness. Beyond the basics of life (food, shelter, community), what higher standard could one possibly hold as the *sine qua non* of human happiness? Yet these simple things do not in themselves exhaust the possibilities of human happiness. Happiness, it seems, does progress, but it progresses within limited contexts bounded by societal norms. Were the Aztec happier than the Britons? Are the Japanese happier than the Germans? The trail of happiness leads nowhere, unless in circles, and talk of progress is best confined to a particular place and time. To believe that one's own time (or any past or future time) exists as the benchmark for human happiness and progress is therefore the height of folly and an exhibition not of human reason, but of hubris, the great sin of the Greeks which so fascinated German thinkers such as Goethe, Hölderlin, and Hegel. It is not necessary to interpret the world teleologically in order to believe that an objective benchmark exists for human progress or happiness. Important accounts exist which hold that human perfection is a thing of the past, and that present ages are at best dim copies of the happiness of earlier epochs. Rousseau's concept of the degeneration of civilization has already been remarked upon, and the opening lines of *Émile* may be quoted here with effect: "The Author of all things makes everything good; in the hands of man, it degenerates" (Rousseau *ŒC* 4:2). The desire to use happiness, either as a transcendental or a pragmatic measure of human progress, can move forward and backward in history, yet it always fails to recognize the particular nature of human happiness. It is for this reason that Hegel prefers to trace the progress of *freedom* rather than happiness in history. Indeed, he says that "One can consider history from the standpoint of happiness, but history is not the soil in which happiness grows. Periods of happiness are history's blank pages" (Hegel *VPW* 92). Herder shares Hegel's desire to trace human freedom rather than happiness, though unlike Hegel, Herder is fascinated with history's "blank pages."

On the other hand, one can go too far in portraying Herder as an Aristotelian political thinker in the closed self-sufficiency of the nation state. It remains to be said that Herder's emphasis on change, process, and particularity did not overshadow his conviction that all was not random change, blind chance; Herder's historicism is not the sort that called for a closed system, wherein each historical present is its own beginning and end. For Herder, although there was a design operative in the world, it could never be understood if that plan were inextricably tied to progress, happiness, or the like. Yet as Herder himself noted, there was "a design of progress" which was visible in the flux of human history if looked at correctly. Herder was well aware of challenges to the Leibnizian "best possible worlds" theories such as were presented in the Lisbon earthquake of 1755. But far from seeing these things as problems for his views of history, Herder turned them around on his rivals. In order for philosophers to use history to prove their theories about progress, "facts were enhanced or invented outright, counter-facts were reduced or concealed, whole aspects were covered over, the meaning of words assumed: enlightenment for happiness, some more refined ideas in place of virtues – and thus the generally progressing improvement of the world was turned into fables believed by no one, least of all by genuine students of history and the human heart" (Herder *SW* 5:511). In other words, though there is progress in the world, and even a design which may be intimated, it cannot be tied to universalized claims about the progress of the race as a whole.

The failure of airtight systems to prove the progress of the race and usher in the arrival of final human happiness caused many to dismiss the idea of order and reason in history altogether (Herder singles out Voltaire, Hume, and Diderot as the inaugurators of "the great century of doubt and wave-making," *SW* 5:512). Such a dismissal is an equally thoughtless mistake, Herder thinks, because it fails to reckon with the true meaning of progress: "Should progress and development not be manifested, yet in a higher sense than has heretofore been assumed? Do you see that this stream which flows on, as it issued from a tiny spring, grows … and yet remains water! A stream! A drop! Always only a drop, until it plunges into the sea – what if it were thus with the human race?" (*SW* 5:512). For Herder, the plan of divine providence is not chaos, but a unified striving, "all clearly progressing, a striving, each upon the other in continuity [*ein Streben auf einander in Kontinuität*]" (*SW* 5:512). That which comes before serves that which comes after only insofar as it is complete within itself; the striving is not between epochs, but within them. This is Herder's crucial point. He says that it is *ein ewiges Streben*, "endless striving," and thus "the grand image tends towards totality. It becomes … the stage of a guiding design on earth, even if we should not see the final design, the stage of the divine, though only through the openings and the leavings of individual scenes" (*SW* 5:513). Herder would have philosophers view history as St. Paul says that

humanity must apprehend the designs of God, that is, "through a glass, darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12). There is vision, there is awareness of a plan, but the awareness is dim, incomplete, and partial, as befits knowledge gained from such temporal particularities as the events of history.

5.3 Freedom and the future

If, despite (or perhaps because of) the power of novelty and change in history, Herder still believed that there was a discernible plan of divine providence which worked itself out via the variations of national and cultural striving, how did he maintain a robust doctrine of human freedom? What is the relationship between the future, the plan of divine providence, and the power of human nations and cultures to work out their own destinies, and what has this to do with the philosophy of history? First, it is instructive to attempt to understand what Herder means when he speaks of providence (*die Vorsehung*) in his philosophy of history. Herder opposed the materialistic bent of much of eighteenth-century thought, judging it too mechanistic and linear. The process of history is a spiritual reality, though as he makes clear, it cannot be grasped in its totality by human reason, and in order to understand it at all, one has to pay special attention to the actual players of history, the nations and peoples of the world. Interestingly, Herder's focus on the individual leads him to discuss the power of the soul in history, as that part of human being which is said to be eternal, intelligent, and capable of participating in the whole of history. This participation is possible for humanity via Herder's natural theology, what he frequently calls in his 1784 *Philosophy of History* the "analogy of nature" (Herder *SW* 13:9), whereby the human soul is able to draw upon its natural reason in order to understand, at least partially, the truths of God. Herder's discussion here is part of the larger context of natural law to which he subscribed. "The conscious self is related to all life, for in both the conscious self and in nature rules the same inner power of God. The analogy with nature … was more than a metaphorical description, it was a description of God in all his works," writes Spitz (1955: 461). Herder "expected this type of analogy to yield fruitful insights into history, a thing which a priori philosophical speculation was unable to do." It is interesting to note that Herder's notion of the access human reason has to God's truth is strikingly similar to the discussion in the *Summa theologiae* of Aquinas (I-II.qq.93–94) dealing with reason's knowledge of the eternal law via the natural law.

Herder's philosophy of history is therefore a sort of dialectical reasoning between the human and the divine, and a way by which Herder can reconcile the ancient debate about change and stability (going back at least as far as Parmenides and Heraclitus, which debate Hegel also believed he had solved). The fact that historical change is real in no way undercuts the continuity in the

natural laws of the cosmos. Herder's philosophy steers a middle path between a common religious piety which holds together omnipotence and omnibenevolence without any thoughtful tension, and a secular dismissal of any and all God-talk in the realm of human history. Yet it must be said that, when a choice is given between seeing divine or strictly human causes in the overall patterns of history, Herder opts for the former. In the last analysis, Herder is closer to Heraclitus than Parmenides (as is Hegel). "Everywhere, the great analogy of nature has led me to religious truths," Herder writes (Herder *SW* 13:9). What keeps Herder's account from becoming a collection of banal religious platitudes is his keen insistence that, even though the plan of God will be worked out along its own lines, it falls upon humanity, working in accordance with nature, to make the plan real, as it were. Humanity's role in this is secured by the freedom achieved in human societies. What Herder calls the "organic powers of creation" (*SW* 13:10), the scientific and naturalistic truths of human discovery, play as important a role as simple faith ever did in the study of human history. Empty speculation will not avail human reason, if it turns away from the experience of history; such abstract attempts at mapping the plan of providence in history, "divorced from experience and the analogy of nature, appear to me as flights of fancy and seldom lead to their goal. The path of God in nature [*Gang Gottes in der Natur*], the intentions which the Eternal has actually shown us in the chain of his works, these are the sacred text, the letters of which I have tried to spell out" (*SW* 13:9). Divine providence, then, has laid the path before humanity, but humanity must walk it, guided by its best lights and its close attention to the natural – and historical – world.

Herder's idea of human freedom flows directly from this understanding of divine providence. History is not a given; that is, it is not a metaphysical script for human players to read as time ticks inevitably on. History is full of very real events, brought to possibility by the machinations of divine providence, but made real by the actions of human beings. Consequently, humans exercise their freedom in two spheres, as it were, the natural sphere of history and the eternal sphere of destiny. Herder himself puts this in more prosaic terms. He speaks of human existence as a contradiction, a *rapprochement* between the animal and the soul, the divine. For evidence of this, he cites the high hopes of humanity, and humanity's attendant failure to ever fully realize those hopes. Crucially, unlike the skeptics of the eighteenth century, Herder does not see the existence of failure, evil, and loss as a sign of the chaos of the universe, or the absence of the divine. Herder is content to live with contingent ambiguity. "The human alone is in contradiction with itself and the earth: the most highly developed creation among all other organisms, it is at the same time the least developed in its own higher dispositions … the human represents two worlds at the same time, and this makes for the seeming duplicity of its being" (*SW* 13:196; Herder strikes an Augustinian note here, cf. *De civitate dei* XV §1, but

unlike Augustine, Herder does not divorce the meaning and truth of the two cities). This seeming duplicity (or, in Hegelian terms, this dialectic) is the source of human freedom. Because humanity exists in two worlds at once, the animal world of sensual history and the spiritual world of the soul, humanity is the locus of history, the axis upon which the cosmos revolves. Earthly events and heavenly intentions come together in the works of peoples and nations, giving rise to striving, to culture, to civilizations, to *Volk*. As people change, cultures change, civilizations rise and fall, and the plans of divine providence become mixed with the capacities of human beings to realize them. Consciousness itself comes about in this way, namely, the striving of the spiritual nature of humanity to realize itself through finite and imperfect means. Herder says that "the clearer mode of consciousness, the great asset of the human soul, was brought into it only gradually, in a spiritual way, and by means of humanity" (*SW* 13:184). So humanity plays a crucial role in the achievement of the plans of divine providence through the exercise of its freedom, gained through experience and built up through the growth of knowledge painfully won from the provisional victories of history.

As a result of his convictions about human freedom and its role in the aims of divine providence, Herder maintains that history has to be open-ended and the future truly undecided. This is a key point to be made; it impinges directly upon the issue of the end of history, how that idea might have entered via philosophy into Hegel's thought, and how it affects the way in which Hegel is interpreted today. It is especially interesting to note that the idea that history has a definite and knowable goal emerges in Herder's thought in tandem with discussions that are specifically *theological*, for Herder understood that claims about divine power involved claims about divine knowledge as well. Herder resolved the dilemma of divine omnipotence and human freedom (another instance of the problem of the one and the many) by situating human freedom within the plan of divine causality – a common way to solve the problem of divine power, but not always a satisfying one. No matter how Herder understood divine foreknowledge, however, he makes it quite clear that the future is, from a human standpoint at least, something that must remain open. Human freedom and historical contingency will decide the further course of the world, as it has decided the past courses of world history. Moreover, that history will itself be a manifestation of the aims of divine providence. Humanity need not concern itself with such speculations, however; it is enough to try and understand, from within the labyrinths of human action, the courses of world history in the present. Herder writes in the 122nd of his *Letters Concerning the Advancement of Humanity* (1797):

> You seem to believe that a history of humanity is incomplete so long as one does not know the outcome of things, or, as it were, one has not lived though the Last Judgement. I am not of this opinion. Whether the human race improves or worsens, whether we

become angels or demons, sylphs or gnomes, we know what we have to do. We grasp the history of our race according to the basis of the firm principles of our convictions of right and wrong, let the last act end as it may. (Herder *SW* 18:286)

Herder's discussion in the aforementioned *Letter* makes his ethical concern with human freedom clear. He accepts a straightforward account of human development, that is, "that almost all peoples on earth once lived in a more primitive state, and only a few of them were brought culture by others" (*SW* 18:287). Far from beginning here, as others have done, with a progressive account of human history, wherein value is equated with the growth or progress of culture, Herder draws from the primitive beginnings of humanity seven distinct points. These can be summarized as follows: (i) all stages of human societal development are equally valuable; (ii) human reason is equally present in all stages in human development; (iii) reason is seen in universal human activity, not this or that ethnic or social group; (iv) the achievement of full reason is inevitable for any given society; (v) the inner laws of human nature guarantee this achivement; (vi) rational cultures can and will flourish in any given corner of the world; (vii) the continuation of reason into the future depends entirely upon the use of reason in the present – there are no further guarantees. These seven points deserve to be discussed in detail, as they constitute Herder's best insights on human development within history.

First, he says, "upon the round earth all ages of humanity live and move" and thus any given "stage" of human development is to be valued in and of itself. "Just as every humanitarian duty urges us not to disrupt the child's development … the same mandate also holds concerning nation against nation" (*SW* 18:287). This would seem to place Herder closer to Rousseau than Voltaire, and there are certainly similarities. But Herder does not share Rousseau's distrust for the later development of humanity. Indeed, we can say with Kohn (2005 [1944]: 446), "Herder transferred Rousseau's native optimism – that natural man is good, that he should not be influenced from the outside, but should follow his own original instincts and so develop 'organically' – from the individual to the nation: nothing is good except that which lives in the 'natural' instincts of the nation." Herder's second conclusion about human freedom addresses this Rousseauian distrust: "one ought to fear to consider this or that nation as existing entirely on an animal level, and to treat its people as beasts of burden," be those people past, present, or even future humans (Herder *SW* 18:288). Herder affirms the equality of all stages of human life based on the ubiquity of reason, a move that he criticizes in other philosophers, but for different reasons. Herder does not see the "one and the same" reason as a manifestation of a static given, to be uncovered through the science of progressive philosophy. Rather, reason for him is a manifestation of "the law of equality" which is "not alien to any nation – all have suffered for violating it each in their own way" (*SW* 18:288).

Reason is to be found not in an exalted humanity, abstracted from its cultural baggage, but rather is the possession of all cultures, and shows itself through the variations of human *Dasein*, not in spite of it.

Herder considers all discussions about the future to be fraught with ethical considerations. This is consistent with the emphasis on particularity one finds in his thought (what is important is what one does *now*, the history one makes in conjunction with one's contemporaries, localized in the actions of one's own historical context) as well as his concentration on human freedom in history. Sikka (2011: 93) situates Herder's understanding of freedom within his dialogue with Kantian ethics and in line with the later thrust of Hegelian philosophy of history:

> Herder's objections to Kant … never take issue with the categorical imperative forbidding the treatment of human beings merely as means. On the contrary, he criticizes Kant's model of history for failing adequately to respect this imperative, which he extends, in his own historical analysis, to social and cultural groups. His critical judgements about exploitative relations between these groups do rest, then, on a fundamental moral principle grounded in the value of human freedom. That principle would also appear to be the yardstick by which Herder, like Hegel, measures political progress. Even the course of this progress is quasi-dialectical, anticipating a crucial element of Hegel's philosophy of history … It seems, therefore, that Herder's position strongly anticipates Hegel's idea that history reveals the manifold shapes of the human spirit in its quest for perfection. Though Herder's philosophy of history is heavy with talk of inevitability, his actual conclusions and speculations about human history are perhaps not surprisingly free of grand pronouncements about the fate of humanity as a whole. Herder is content to watch the unfolding of the providential plan within nations and peoples, without attempting to speak *ex cathedra* about some greater meaning; the meaning *is* the progress of freedom, but bounded within the particular historical, cultural, or social milieu within which it arises.

Freedom in history, then, is a quality which shows itself within cultures and nations, not a quality that develops in opposition to them. The shape of freedom, like happiness, can only be understood from within a culture and in terms of its own ethical narrative, and is not a philosophical given that is imposed from without. In this sense, for Herder every culture is "free," for each has a notion of freedom that is right for its context (this notion of Herderian freedom has led to the mistaken idea that Herder is a moral rather than cultural relativist). Herder's statements about the future of world history bear the marks of this notion of freedom, for he is unwilling to anoint any particular culture the ultimate bearer of freedom's final shape.

Herder's third conclusion about freedom makes this explicit: reason manifests freedom through actions, not a priori claims about progress. "If the various intellectual powers are the advantage of the Europeans, they can live up to this advantage only through reason and goodness (which are, essentially, the same thing)" (Herder *SW* 18:288). Here again Herder joins together reason, progress,

and ethics. Progress is thus neither temporal nor linear (all *strictly* teleological accounts of history are odious to Herder), it is behavioral. If Europeans act like animals, it is an indication that they have become animals, "demons which oppose their fellow human beings" (*SW* 18:288). Here is another similarity with Rousseau, though again, Herder does not see this decline as an inevitable fact given the nature of civilization within the social contract. In fact, Herder's fourth and fifth conclusions about human freedom seem to assert that the marriage of reason and goodness is, in some sense, inevitable. What he calls an "autumn of reflectiveness," wherein trade, conduct, and diplomacy are characterized by reason, equality, and kindness, "would have to appear in the course of necessity as well as calculation. Even our vices and excesses must promote its appearance" (*SW* 18:289). Why must it appear? Because (and here Herder comes closest to the opinions of the *philosophes* which he rejected) in the human race "no rule should prevail … unless such an age were brought about by the inner laws of the race itself and by the struggle of its powers [*durch innere Gesetze dieses Geschlechts selbst und den Antagonismus seiner Kräfte*]" (*SW* 18:289). In other words, reason will out, in the end, though that end be always hidden. "Woe betide reason, if it be not reason everywhere," Herder writes, "and the common good were not that which is the most commonly useful. The magnetic needle of our striving seeks this pole – after all the straying and wavering, it will and must find it" (*SW* 18:290). Herder, like Hobbes, seems to believe that natural human reason will enable humanity to rise above the nightmare of its own slavery and forge freedom in the teeth of its unethical strivings. This is Herder's clearest concession to the idea of the inevitability of human progress. Does it threaten to derail his project? Is Herder in the end committed to a more nuanced but essentially deterministic view of history identical to that of the skeptics and *philosophes* of his own day, though shorn of their hubris and gloating?

Two things save Herder from this fate. First, Herder's ideas about reason being the "pole" of human striving cannot be divorced from the actual orientation of that pole, which is toward actual, contingent nations and peoples. Compare Herder's ideas with those of Thomas Hobbes. For all their differences, Hobbes also thinks that particularity overcomes universality, for the specific form the rational social contract will take is wholly dependent upon the mores, needs, and historical situation of the people that enact it. Therefore, and despite the authoritarian bent of Hobbes's specific version of the social contract, even Hobbes envisions that the social contract cannot and must never become a universal absolute. Moreover, Hobbes builds into his system a safeguard against the absolute claims of the Leviathan. Hobbes is quite clear, though this passage is often overlooked by scholars, that "the obligation of subjects to the sovereign is understood to last as long, and no longer, than the power lasts by which he is able to protect them. For the right men have by nature to protect

themselves, when none other can protect them, can by no covenant be relinquished" (*Leviathan* II.xxi.21) That is, what Carl Schmitt (1996: 52) calls the "protection-obedience axiom" is always at work in Hobbes's political thought, and Herder is not far off from this position, either. The similarity to Herder becomes clear: human freedom is rooted in the act of becoming free, and not some fiat granted by an overarching narrative power. When freedom is imperiled, its autonomous nature exerts itself in Hobbes's *jus naturale* (Hobbes, *Leviathan* I.xiv.1), namely "the liberty each man hath to use his own power … for the preservation of his own nature." The same applies to peoples; Hobbes is both authoritarian and individualistic, but Herder (with Aristotle and Hegel) is broadly communitarian in his approach to the organic nature of a people and that people's historical character.

At the same time, Herder is not making pronouncements about the fate of the entire human race; rather, he is proposing that *any given part* of the human race must reach the goal of reason, happiness, and kindness *at any given time* in its development. As history is a tale of the rise and fall of peoples, any given nation which reaches this peak will at some point and in some way stray from it. This involves Herder's notion of the future in a retelling of the old story of progress, stripped of its talk of inevitability, despite his asseveration that the "autumn of reflection" must become real at some point in time.

Second, historical determinism requires pronouncements about the future, and Herder is quite clear that the final age of reason cannot be guessed at, or linked to any particular culture or nation in the past, the present, or the future. He is especially willing to consider that Europe – the apex and locus of the Enlightenment – might play no part at all in the future striving of the human race. He writes, "The more the powers and states of Europe age … the more intellectual and primal powers may join together in ways we can hardly imagine. Who can look into a future which perhaps already carries these seeds? Cultured states may be established where we can hardly imagine; cultured states fade, though we considered them immortal" (Herder *SW* 18:288–89). This is Herder's sixth conclusion about the fate of human history, namely, that nations and cultures can and likely will flourish in any and every part of the globe. History is not the history of Europe per se, nor is it the tale of the decline from a lost perfection. History is the account of human flourishing and decline wherever and however it may occur.

"What harm is it to the human race if one degenerate part of it were to vanish?" Herder asks. "Others take the place of those that withered and freshly bloom even more. Why should the western reaches of our northern hemisphere be the sole home of culture? And is this really so?" (*SW* 18:290). Herder's question to those who proclaim the triumph of the West is not a rhetorical one, and is as fresh in the current age as it was when he asked it in 1797. For his part, Hegel's answer to Herder's question will constitute the greater part of his

philosophy of history. But for Herder, the openness of the future and the contingency of human history is summed up in his seventh and final conclusion about human history: "The greatest revolutions in the fate of the human race up to the current time have depended upon inventions, or upon the revolutions of the earth; who knows all of these, in the immeasurable cycle of the ages? … The bloom withers as soon as it has fully blossomed; but it leaves its fruit behind" (*SW* 18:290). The future is the present's to decide only insofar as the present leaves a "good seed" for future ages. Should that seed fail to mature, or grow in a twisted fashion, history will be other than the present wished. But is this not the way of things? All talk of inevitable progress is a manifestation of hope, and nothing more. This is not to be discounted, for hope is one of the greatest things that the present can bequeath to the future. But hope does not constitute certainty, and the future belongs to ages still to come. It cannot be declared ended, closed, or circumscribed, for human striving is its only engine. When human striving – towards freedom, towards happiness – ends, then history might be declared ended, and the future closed off from further development. However, Herder does not believe that this state of affairs could ever come about. Certainly, if it did it would not constitute an event worth celebrating, and indeed there would be none left able or willing to mark its passing. Human history perdures only as long as human striving struggles onwards into a free but uncertain future.

Towards the end of his life, Herder returned to the idea of the future, particularly as a reaction to the turn of the nineteenth century and the hopes expressed by the generation that had come of age during the time of the French and American Revolutions. In a short essay entitled "Säkularische Hoffnungen," written for his own periodical *Adrastea* in 1802, the year before his death, Herder seriously questions the movement among this generation to forecast the coming glories of the new century. This small essay serves as a fitting conclusion to the discussion of Herder's contribution to the philosophy of history, as the winds of intellectual change were about to shift in favor of young philosophers such as Schelling and Hegel and their contributions to the philosophical accounting of the human race. The torch was about to be passed, however unwittingly, and Herder's essay raised many questions that the new torchbearer would have to answer. Hegel takes up the challenge of preserving particular histories and then uniting them into a single grand historical synthesis as no one else had before him, including Herder. But Herder is more circumspect. For him, "each new century began its course in splendor. One wanted to mark its entry with something new and grandiose, one decorated it beautifully, the portal of hope" (Herder *SW* 23:485). This is right and good, of course, following as it does Herder's earlier insistence that the future is prepared for by the present, which lays down good seeds in the hopes of a

flourishing harvest in the ages to come. But Herder strikes a note of melancholy as he assesses the end of his own century, the eighteenth, and compares it with the high hopes with which it had begun, in the heyday of Newton and Leibniz. "In our own time," Herder writes, referring to *la Terreur* in France, "who does not think of the exit of the eighteenth century with a mute horror? Beginning in 1790 and up to 1800, there were happenings not witnessed by the entire previous century – though the ground for much of it had long since been prepared. But how many of the unfortunate are no more, who, at the beginning of our century, hoped for a new world!" (*SW* 23:486). This is the despairing cry of every "modern" generation: did not 1900 soon see its 28 July 1914? And did not 2000 all too swiftly give way to 11 September 2001? Herder tells us that coming centuries should expect the same. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

Whatever might have been gained by the French Revolution, for example, the losses were real, and could never have been foreseen by the prognosticators of history as 1699 turned to 1700. In fact, at the turn of the seventeenth century, Herder notes, the new century was expected to be an age of unity between heaven and earth, while by the end of the eighteenth century and the start of the nineteenth, atheism and skepticism held sway. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, "everything was to be drawn down from the heavens," while by the end of the century, "one renounced God, no longer expected help from above; the fortune of the human race was to be based on autonomy" (*SW* 23:486) – doubtless a backhanded compliment to Kant. There is more here than simply an old and pious man grousing about the end of the "good old days." Herder has diagnosed a very real problem, namely, the tendency of each age to see in itself the fulfillment of all that had come before. This tendency will come to a head with Hegel's philosophy, though not in terms of an "end." Herder's warning is one that each generation of philosophers who takes an interest in history must heed: "How much fulfillment may be hoped for and not hoped for in centenary expectations must be told to us by reason, experience, and the history of past ages; unfortunate is the youth who falls into such a whirlpool of confused ideas and coarse or refined presumptions. He finds salvation late, or he drowns" (*SW* 23:487). Only by keeping in mind the lessons from the specificities of history (lessons which always include tempered if not abandoned hopes) can one keep one's head above the raging waters of celebratory triumph as new age follows old. It is not a pessimistic vision, but neither is it one based upon unbridled, metaphysical optimism. Herder's great strength was to sharply focus always upon the details of history as they came to light in the particularities of nations, cultures, and civilizations. Such a focus leaves little room for historical aggrandizement.

Yet Herder's philosophy of history is an invitation to dwell in hope, if not in assured optimism. This is the vision that Herder held out to the next generation,

which included Fichte and Hegel, as he struggled with the ontohistorical claims of the *philosophes* and sought to come to grips with the real significance of history for philosophy.

> If I were to succeed in tying together the most disparate scenes without confusing them – to show how they relate to one another, grow out of one another, lose themselves in one another, each individually only moments in time, through the progression of means to an end – what a vision! What a noble application of human history! What encouragement to hope, to act, to believe, even if one does not see anything – or does not see everything! (Herder *SW* 5:513)

To bear up intellectually without being able to see as Spinoza claimed to see, that is, *sub specie aeternitatis* (Spinoza, *Ethics* II prop. 44), is to participate in the Kantian critique of metaphysics which Herder did not embrace in its Kantian form, though he supported it in its aims. More than this, it is to accept the contingency that comes with studying history as it is lived by individual nations and peoples. Herder's great contribution to the philosophy of history was to define it away from those who would use it as a tool to prove the achievements of human reason at the expense of the facts of history itself. Fichte and Hegel approach the study of history informed by Herder's Copernican revolution, his great realignment, though they react more to the Kantian critique of metaphysics than to Herder's specific claims about history. Yet it is Herder's work in the philosophy of history that has to be kept in mind, for as we will see, neither Fichte nor Hegel completely learns the lessons that Herder tried to teach. Hegel will pay closer attention to the particulars of history, as Herder insisted, but he will attempt to show through the vicissitudes of history itself the arrival of absolute reason. Fichte, on the other hand, has almost as little use for the particulars of history as the *philosophes*, and his philosophical thinking on history is a striking blend of Kantian idealism and the historical progressivism of Voltaire.

6 Fichte and history

> Fichte was the first philosopher to focus on the uncanny contingency at the very heart of subjectivity: the Fichtean subject is not the overblown Ego = Ego as the absolute origin of all reality, but a finite subject thrown, caught, in a contingent social situation forever eluding mastery.
>
> Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, 1999

6.1 Universal history and human knowledge

However important Herder's philosophy is for the development of German thought from Enlightenment Classicism to Romanticism, the intellectual bridge from the philosophical ferment of the late eighteenth century, brought on by the epochal works of Immanuel Kant, and the explosive period of political, religious, and philosophical change at the beginning of the nineteenth century, was not Herder, but the thinker Johann Gottlieb Fichte. The precocious scion of a family of modest means, Fichte studied at the ducal boarding school – a local lord subsidized the boy's education, so impressed was he with Fichte's intellect (La Vopa 2001: 25) – and attended the seminary at Jena. Fichte shot to intellectual prominence in Germany when, under the profound influence of Kant's critical philosophy, he published a work in 1792 under the title *Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung*. The short work, published in part to impress Kant, was given to the public without Fichte's name or preface, but so close was the work to all the essential points of Kantian thought, it was assumed that Kant had written it. When Fichte came forward as the author, Kant openly praised the piece and Fichte's fame began to spread. He soon took over from Reinhold at Jena, and taught there until 1799, when he resigned his position over accusations of atheism (the famed *Atheismusstreit*). Fichte taught for a time at Erlangen, and when the University of Berlin was opened in 1809, he accepted an appointment in philosophy and was elected rector of the university in 1810. Once again, however, managing to alienate all of his most important supporters (including Goethe), he resigned from there as well in 1811 and lived the remainder of his life on proceeds from his philosophical publications.

Fichte is best known for his philosophical system published in various forms and given the name *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* when it was initially published in 1794, though its various versions have always been known simply as the *Wissenschaftslehre* or *The Science of Knowledge*. Fichte constantly revised his philosophical works, nuancing earlier held positions and sometimes changing his mind entirely. "This has made interpreting Fichte especially laborious … almost anything one says in general about the *Wissenschaftslehre* as a whole can be countered with some contrary passage in one of the versions" (Pinkard 2002: 108). For this reason alone, it is wise to look elsewhere for concrete examples of Fichte's ideas about history. Rather than looking into his speculative philosophy, I turn to what functions for all intents and purposes as Fichte's philosophy of history, the neglected set of lectures given in 1804–5 and published in 1806 as *Die Grundzüge des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, or *The Characteristics of the Present Age*. By detailing the claims Fichte makes in these lectures concerning history, freedom, and the divine, and juxtaposing them with Herder's earlier and influential ideas about history, one is in a much better position to appreciate Hegel's own claims about these issues in their historical and philosophical contexts, as both were influential (positively as well as negatively) on his thought. *The Characteristics of the Present Age* belongs with Fichte's popular works, for the lectures were given publically and were intended to work out the implications of his idealism for practical matters such as history and politics. In this, these lectures serve an analogous function to Hegel's own lectures on the philosophy of history (given as college lectures and not public talks per se), though Fichte's lectures have never served as popular introductions to his speculative philosophy, as Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history did for his thought. Indeed, Fichte's *Characteristics of the Present Age* has suffered from benign neglect in the English-speaking world (Smith's two-volume 1848 translation of Fichte's popular works remains the only complete English translation); while the various editions of the complicated *Wissenschaftslehre* are studied regularly, the comparatively straightforward *Grundzüge* is relegated to obscurity as an idiosyncratic statement on historical necessity by a philosopher about to be eclipsed by younger, more radical thinkers such as Hegel.

Collingwood (1994: 108) sums up much of the scholarship dealing with Fichte's philosophy of history: "The chief difficulty which a reader finds in dealing with Fichte's view of history is the difficulty of being patient with what appears so silly" – though Collingwood questions whether this verdict is completely warranted. For just as Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* is widely recognized as a central link in the development of idealism from Kant to Hegel, so is Fichte's *Grundzüge* the single most important link between Herder's Romantic appropriation of the philosophy of history from Voltaire and the Enlightenment *philosophes*, and the full flowering of the mature philosophy

of history of Hegel. Hegel scholarship has neglected Fichte's *Grundzüge* to its own loss. Herder's work provided the impetus for looking at historical ages as actual histories which had value in and of themselves, from their own points of view and in terms of their own social, political, and spiritual needs; Fichte is able to take these varied histories, more specifically the revolutionary and reformist history of his own time, and infuse them with a universal philosophy which, though Herder had warned against such all-encompassing systems of thought, was able to perfectly catch the *Zeitgeist* of the emerging nineteenth-century political and philosophical ferment. Though it remained for Hegel to make the philosophical understanding of history truly philosophical in a way that his contemporaries would embrace, Fichte is the first important post-Kantian philosopher to offer a comprehensive system of history and philosophy which attempts to come to terms with both actual history (which is explicit in Herder), and universal philosophical claims (which in Herder's thought remain nascent and unthematic, at least compared to the extent to which Fichte makes use of them). The French *philosophes* had endeavored to come to grips with actual historical events through the single idea of human moral and intellectual progress; this was why the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 was so intellectually harrowing to them. Herder used the concept of a divine, benevolent providential power to draw together the disparate histories which were his primary aim, without actually attempting to philosophize about the goals and aims of that power within history, except in terms of a vague notion of (non-absolutized) historical fulfillment. Philosophers such as Fichte were able to unite religious claims about divine providence and philosophical claims about necessity in a single narrative which mitigated much historical evil, leaving them more sanguine about the fate of reason, though perhaps no more realistic about events than the hyper-rationalist *philosophes*.

The Characteristics of the Present Age begins with Fichte's outline of what he terms "universal history," and the way in which philosophers, as opposed to historians, appropriate such a history in their work. Fichte intended his lectures to be accessible to an educated but general audience, and so couched his philosophy in terms that the public would be more ready to understand, particularly religious terms. Fichte thus provides a level of popular transparency lacking in, say, Herder or Hegel (though harking back to the writings of Voltaire), aimed at a general, educated class of hearer and reader. His goal in delivering the lectures is to give a "philosophical picture of the present age," in which historical phenomena are understood through "one common principle" which is the "concept of the age [*der Begriff des Zeitalters*]" (Fiche *SW* 7:4–5). Such a concept or idea is the sole purview of philosophy, says Fichte, for only a philosophical way of thinking digs deeply enough into fundamentals to unlock the kernel of necessity from the welter of contingent facts which make up history. Unlike Herder, who tries never to leave the concrete phenomena of

historical life, Fichte is avowedly anti-empirical; that is, Fichte, unlike Herder, is not primarily concerned with the facts of history as he develops his investigation into *der Begriff des Zeitalters*. He refers to *der bloße Empiriker* who chronicles events but never pay heed to the underlying principles at work, the "common idea which lies at the bottom of them all" (*SW* 7:5). Fichte's goal in laying out the philosophical development of history is to show how a single, universal idea is operative in all the changing facts of history, and to do it in such a way that he has no need to refer to actual events. He insists, "if the philosopher has to deduce all the possible phenomena of experience from the unity of a presupposed concept [*aus der Einheit seines vorausgesetzten Begriffs*], it is clear that in the fulfillment of this purpose the aid of experience is not necessary" (*SW* 7:5). The presupposed concept in question is therefore strictly a priori, arrived at entirely through the use of reason, and universal in its application no matter the specific details of the history in question. What Fichte proposes is nothing less than the transcendental deduction of historical truth. It is difficult to imagine a philosophical principle of history further from the one that Herder developed.

In outlining such a principle, however, Fichte is only following the quasi-Kantian lines that he had drawn earlier in the *Wissenschaftslehre*. For example, in the 1797 version of this latter text, Fichte writes (*SW* 1:446–47):

> Idealism … knows nothing of experience and takes no account of it at all; it proceeds from its starting point in accordance with its rule, unconcerned about what will emerge in the end. It has been given its right angle from which to draw its straight line; does it then still need a point to which to draw it? In my opinion, all the points on its line are given along with it.

It is not that the facts of history are unimportant for Fichte; after all, history is the realm within which the a priori principles are deduced. It is just that the facts are a posteriori and so contingent and particular, and as such, they are no ground in which to found a universal principle. Or to be more precise, "for a complete idealism, a priori and a posteriori are not two different things [*nicht Zweierlei*] but wholly the same … Whoever is of a different opinion does not know what he is saying" (*SW* 1:447). Hence, Fichte's idea of universal history is as strong a statement about a priori knowledge as one is likely to find in German Idealism, dealing as it does not only with individual instances of human knowing (i.e. about this or that fact or event), but with the temporal nature of reality itself. Fichte holds that the philosopher, based on an a priori principle which he has yet to elaborate, should be able "a priori to describe the whole of time, and all possible ages [*die gesammte Zeit, und alle möglischen Epochen*]" (*SW* 7:5), without recourse to any particular moment in time. The temporality of human history must give way to the atemporality of human knowing – an inversion of Kant's notion that the very forms of intuition (space and

time) are the necessary components of any possible knowledge. According to Fichte, this is the only sure way to understand any particular age – an inversion of Herder's idea that *only* within the changes and chances of a particular epoch can the meaning of human history be found. For Fichte, meaning is established before any actual events which call for it arrive on the scene. This will be an important fact to consider when Fichte briefly takes up the theodic question of meaning in the face of irrational or gratuitous evil in history. At the same time, Fichte does not entirely reject the Herderian emphasis on individual ages; quite the contrary, in this series of popular lectures it is Fichte's stated goal to elucidate his own present age in a way that he is able to reveal to his auditors the universal principles at work. Fichte writes, "each particular epoch of time … is the fundamental concept of a particular age" (*SW* 7:6) and thus has to be understood on its own terms and by investigating the events which transpire within it. On the other hand, these particular epochs can only be understood "in their relation to the whole of time. Hence it is clear that the philosopher … must first have understood a priori and thoroughly penetrated into the meaning of the whole of time and all its possible epochs" (*SW* 7:6).

Fichte's verdict is clear: history can only be grasped intelligibly through a priori means, and all possible epochs are potential deductions which the philosopher might well understand in their entirety before they ever occur. Fichte's principle of history will be able to grasp human historicity in such a way, and thus will be able to deduce the meaning of events within (though apart from) the particularity of the event. What is this universal principle? Fichte philosophically thematizes that which Herder only theologically implied: history itself operates in accordance with a world plan (*einen Weltplan*), which the philosopher is able to deduce a priori. Such an a priori deduction is the purpose of Fichte's lectures on the philosophy of history. Fichte's execution of this philosophical deduction is a whirlwind of philosophical appropriation of traditional religious terminology. So theologically tinged is Fichte's language on the face of it that one is tempted to question Fichte's stated devotion to Kant's great *Critique*s. Yet there is an odd and compelling Kantianism in his deduction of the universal principle of time, quite apart from its difference from Kant's idea of time as a necessary form of intuition. Fichte says that his fundamental idea of time entails "an idea of a foreordained, although gradually unfolding, fulfillment of time [*einer vorher bestimmten, obschon allmählig sich entwickelnden Erfüllung dieser Zeit*], in which each successive period is followed by the other … It presupposes a world plan, which … may be clearly comprehended" (*SW* 7:6). Fichte's understanding of historical progress is arrived at via transcendental idealism. Time is ordered according to a world plan established by and comprehensible through a priori reason, in which the particular ages of human life unfold the meaning of the overall plan. Only to the extent that time is so ordered, can it be a category of experience; the a priori has precedence

over and grounds any possible value found within the a posteriori. Fichte's claim to be able to deduce the universal conditions for historical knowledge a priori is a manifestation of his radically subjective doctrine of the *Ich*, which itself grounds any and all claims about epistemic warrant.[1] The self-grounding and self-grounded *Ich* is Fichte's solution to the "Kantian Paradox" (Pinkard 2002: 59), a problem that arises because the self can be bound only by laws of which it is the sole author.

Kant says in his second *Critique* that the claim of the moral law is "a rule that determines the will a priori merely with regard to the form of its maxims" and is thus a "fact of reason" (Kant *GS* 5:31), i.e. it has a claim on us because autonomous reason establishes the claim, which raises the question of self-authorization. According to Kant, human beings are subject only to norms which they themselves author; anything else is externally imposed and a manifestation of heteronomous alterity and thus not morally binding. Fichte stressed that the problem of such self-authorization is solved by his claim that there is at least one thing that grounds all reasoning and all experience – the self that reasons and experiences, thematized by Fichte as the *Ich* (recall Kant's formulation of cognition and experience from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, *GS* 3:B1). Fichte writes in the *Wissenschaftslehre*, "the self asserts, by means of *X*, that *A* exists absolutely for the judging self, and that simply by virtue of its being posited in the self as such … and hence the *X* that is absolutely posited can also be expressed as I = I; I am I [*Ich = Ich*; *Ich bin Ich*]" (Fichte *SW* 1:94). The act (*Tathandlung*) of positing *A* establishes not a reified absolute *Ich*, but proposes a social hierarchy of valuation which allows for the *possibility* of any and all valuation in the first place. Because the self as self grounds all claims to cognition or experience, it stands to reason that the universal aspects of history (such as they are) can be deduced a priori using reason alone – one is tempted to say *using pure reason*, with a nervous nod to Kant's epistemological concerns in

[1] Robert Pippen offers a spirited defense of Fichte against readings that overplay his subjectivism. I am in agreement with the main thrust of Pippin's argument, especially his observation that "Fichte is a foundationalist but of a peculiar sort," and that "there is no 'short argument' to idealism in Fichte" (2000: 157–58). Nevertheless, as *Characteristics* makes clear, it is the self alone (however constituted) that guarantees the a priori cognition of history, so that the *Ich* is able to have complete awareness of the plan of world history. It might be better to think of the subjective *Ich* in the way suggested by Neuhouser. He proposes that Fichte's concern in developing his *Ich* philosophy is to "demonstrate that a single fundamental structure underlies all forms of subjectivity" (Neuhouser 1990: 11), but that this structure not be thought of as a static, one-sided subject simply positing objects dependent upon itself. Rather, the self-positing subject is an activity which entails both "theoretical self-consciousness," which is the self-awareness of the *Ich*, and "practical self-determination," in which the *Ich* determines its "values and norms" (1990: 166) and in so doing constitutes its world and its relations with that world. Such a schema preserves the Fichtean ideal of self-determination (though in a "weaker" sense, 1990: 164–65), while at the same time allowing for real (as opposed to merely "ideal") interactions with history, the world, and other self-positing selves.

his three *Critique*s. Self-grounding and self-aware a priori reason is the sole provenance of the self-positing *Ich*, and so the knowing self is able to deduce the eternal *Weltplan* apart from any and all contingent experience within or knowledge of the events which go to make up the *Weltplan*.

In his fragmentary essay "Urteil and Sein," Hölderlin calls Fichte's formulation *Ich bin Ich* a "most appropriate example" of the "theoretical archē-separation" of subject and object which represents *Urteil* or "judgment" (Hölderlin *GSA* 4:216). Judgment, however, is not what is most fundamental, *pace* Fichte, for judgment separates, resulting in the "practical archē-separation" of the *Ich* and the *nicht-Ich*, the "not I." What unites the *Ich* and the *nicht-Ich* is *Sein*, being, the primordial union of subject and object. Hölderlin argues that "being," apart from this or that discrete identity, "expresses the connection between subject and object" (*GSA* 4:216–17). Therefore, Hölderlin's critique of Fichte's privileging of the subject is that Fichte does not go deep enough in establishing the self's content; Fichte's subjective self relies upon judgment (division), not being (unity). At the same time, Hölderlin's idea of *Sein* is not a reification of being, because he is explicit that "identity is not = to absolute being" (*GSA* 4:217). As Žižek (2012a: 14) explains, "While the content remains non-reconciled, *reconciliation occurs in the narrative form itself* – the exact inverse of the logical assertion of the subject's identity (I = I) where the very form (division, redoubling of the I) undermines content (identity)." It is tempting to see in Hölderlin's fragment on Fichte an influence upon Hegel, particularly the latter's synthesis of subject, object, and concept in the *Enzyklopädie Logik* §§160–244. Even more tempting (for very different reasons) is to link Hölderlin's absolute *Sein* with Heidegger's argument that Western metaphysics confuses *Sein* with *Seiendes* (the so-called "ontological difference"), and to see this fragment as confirmation of Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin's poetry as "the founding of being in words" (Heidegger *GA* 4:42). It would be a mistake to link Heidegger and Hölderlin in this direct way, however, if for no other reason than that Heidegger could not have known about "Urteil und Sein" (undiscovered until 1961) when he was deep in his formative Hölderlin studies. Whether there is an affinity of thought at work here is at best a matter of interpretation, not of fact or direct influence.

Another curious and interesting nod to Kant appears in Fichte's claim that "Human life on earth, and earthly time itself, are but necessary epochs of the one time and of the one eternal life, and this earthly life with all its subordinate divisions may be deduced from the fundamental idea of the eternal life accessible to us here below" (Fichte *SW* 7:7). In other words, it should be what Fichte calls a "demonstrable deduction" that finite time must postulate an eternal time, and that finite life must postulate an eternal life, *a minore ad maius*. Only the epistemological "voluntary limitations" (as opposed to Kantian structural limitations) placed upon the *Ich* regarding eternal knowledge forbid the deduction,

though Fichte sees the logical deduction of universal time and universal life as sufficiently warranted; indeed, it grounds his entire philosophy of history (and is part of Fichte's denial of the Kantian *noumena*). Fichte's idea that eternal a priori realities can be postulated from finite ones seems an echo of Kant's well-known formulation in *Critique of Practical Reason* of God and immortality as postulates of pure practical reason (Kant *GS* 5:122ff.). For Kant, the existence of the moral law required that good (the *summum bonum*) be perfectable; that is, the finite creation of human value must not be frustrated by the pure forms of intuition, space and time. Because such frustration occurs at the time of personal bodily death, Kant goes on to insist that "the highest good is practicable only on the presupposition of the immortality of the soul, and hence this immortality … is a postulate of pure practical reason" (*GS* 5:122). Both Kant and Fichte reason from a "necessary" human limitation to a "necessary" fulfillment of that limitation, and in both cases, the fulfillment is thoroughly non-temporal and thus non-historical. For Kant, some conception of an afterlife is needed to bring the creation of human value to completion (i.e. immortality is an ethical postulate), whereas for Fichte an afterlife guarantees that knowledge gained in the earthly life does not vanish (i.e. immortality is an epistemological postulate), but participates in eternity, understood not as endless temporality, but eternal non-temporality, an "eternal now." Kant also links the notion of the highest good to the achievement of "the happiness commensurate with that morality," and that reason therefore "must lead to the presupposition of the existence of a cause adequate to that effect, i.e. it must postulate the existence of God" (*GS* 5:124). Fichte more or less follows Kant's deduction of the deity from moral principles in his 1798 essay "On the Basis of Our Belief in a Divine Governance of the World" (Fichte *SW* 5:175ff.), but he shows little concern with more rigorous disputations about God in the *Wissenschaftslehre*, and adopts a traditional religious belief in divine providence superficially similar to Herder's in his *Characteristics of the Present Age*.

What is interesting in Fichte's deduction of universal eternal atemporality from earthly historical temporality is that the deduction is a reversal, or mirror image, of the Kantian deduction. For Kant, the deduction of the postulates of pure practical reason God and immortality begins with finite human concerns about morality and happiness. Because human moral goodness and temporal happiness are incomplete in this age (i.e. they are never achieved), another age must exist in which the values of moral goodness and temporal happiness may be perfected, guaranteed by a God "adequate to that effect." In other words, in Kant's philosophy, one moves from human (temporal) to transcendental (atemporal) issues. With Fichte, the opposite is the case. Because the *Ich*-self posits itself absolutely, it has knowledge via reason of all that is or can be, including the universal ideas behind the development of history. "Insofar as the self is

absolute, it is infinite and unbounded. Everything that exists it posits; and what it does not posit, does not exist" (Fichte *SW* 1:254); the *Ich* encounters limitations only when it posits the non-*Ich*, and thus posits itself as ontologically finite and morally, historically bounded. According to Henrich (2003: 272):

> Fichte emphasized that every moral agent believes that there is a world order into which all her activities are incorporated. These activities are *essential* for the process: we must describe the world order as an active ordering in terms of them … This assumption – that the order exists – incorporates us as moral beings into this order. This amounts to saying that we are cooperating in the production of a world in which moral independence is ultimately completely manifested. But it also means that this process of the world is absolutely justified by virtue of itself.

Armed with transcendental reason, the *Ich* is able to untangle the threads of historical existence and see the plan, the purpose, the underlying trajectories of human life. In other words, with Fichte's philosophy, one moves from transcendental (atemporal) to human (temporal) issues. This becomes clear when Fichte finally states the principle he has been hinting at in the beginning of his philosophy of history: "I say therefore – and so lay the cornerstone of our rising edifice – the goal of human life on earth is this, that in this life they may order all their relations with *freedom*, according to *reason* [*das sie in demselben alle ihre Verhältnisse mit* Freiheit *nach der* Vernunft *einrichte*]" (Fichte *SW* 7:7). Freedom arises from reason, insofar as one is able to see the end, and know that all the steps along the way have been in accord with the reasonable plan of universal time. Once humankind apprehends the end, all the steps leading to that end become clear: "thus have we endeavored to prefigure the entire earthly life of humanity by a comprehension of its ultimate purpose [*der Endzweck*]" (*SW* 7:11). Such a universal awareness eliminates chance from the process of human history, for all is as it is by the iron necessity of the universal plan. Human history "proceeds and moves onward according to a settled plan which must necessarily be fulfilled, and thus shall be fulfilled. This plan is – that the human race shall in this life and with freedom form and develop itself into a pure copy of reason [*reinen Abdruck der Vernunft*]" (*SW* 7:17). Like Herder before him and Hegel after him, though for different reasons, Fichte understands human history to be concerned with the rational realization of freedom in history. How is it realized?

Human knowledge comes to its ultimate purpose through five distinct ages of reason, Fichte says, and he organizes the remainder of his lectures around these ages, particularly the third age, which is the age Fichte and his contemporaries currently occupy (*SW* 7:19). These ages are theologically constituted in terms of sin (fall) and justification (redemption) as a picture of the innocence, conflict, and resolution of human reason in history. According to Fichte's schema, the five ages are as follows (*SW* 7:11–12):

1. First Age: reason as instinct; the state of *innocence*.
2. Second Age: reason as authority and obedience; the state of *progressive sinfulness*.
3. Third Age: reason as liberation from instinct and authority; the state of *completed sinfulness*.
4. Fourth Age: reason as knowledge and the love of truth; the state of *progressive justification*.
5. Fifth Age: reason as art [*der Vernunftkunst*]; the state of *completed justification*.

An explication of these fives ages in all their detail would take me far beyond the bounds of this study, though it should be pointed out that Fichte's soteriological development from innocence, to sin, to forgiveness and holiness follows a traditional biblical model and uses self-consciously Christian theological terms such as justification (*die Rechtfertigung*) and sanctification (*die Heiligung*) (cf. Rom. 8:30 and 1 Cor. 6:11); as such, it cries out for fuller discussion. However, it is important not to fail to address the specifically teleological nature of Fichte's idea of history. Fichte insists that, as transcendentally ideal, universal history as such is not strictly teleological or even linear. The five ages may, and in fact do, overlap and coexist in the human experience of chronological time, and even in individual human beings. Because of this, the a priori principle of history is best seen in the persons and individual histories of great people, in whom the age in question "most fully reveals itself" (*SW* 7:13). At the same time, the universal history apprehended by *Wissenschaft* is above all ages and all times, containing and conditioning them, and is not subject to any particular age or any contingent schema. Each of the five ages of human reason is implicated in the one universal time which is the subject of the *Ich*'s a priori knowledge of historical necessity, allowing the philosopher to apprehend the workings of reason in all ages. Though the ages seem to be oriented around a larger trajectory of knowing, the *Ich*'s a priori principle of history ensures that it always already grasps the entirety of the historical project.

No artifact of historical reason is isolated or contingent or remainder in Fichte's philosophy of history; his is not a history with real losses, and evil is swallowed up in the necessity of the plan (*SW* 7:14). In this sense, Fichte has an Augustinian metaphysic with regards to evil – it literally does not exist: "Evil has no positive nature; but the loss of good has received the name 'evil' [*Mali enim nulla natura est; sed amissio boni mali nomen accepit*]" (Augustine, *City of God* XI §9). But Fichte's idea of evil, including what can be called historical evil, has less to do with the ontological status of evil and more to do with the normative valuation of the worth of the *Ich*. As he notes in his 1798 *System of Ethics*, evil is something akin to "self-conceit" which devalues the self as a self (Fichte *SW* 4:188–89); in other words, evil is really a cognitive

problem, and not a matter of the fundamental nature of the universe at all. This position is consistent with Fichte's overall *Ich*-philosophy, for it makes evil a matter of the self's grasp of itself and others, and it allows evil to be subsumed within the larger ongoing narrative of the world plan; the philosopher sees that "everything is necessary and therefore good, and accepts that which is, as it is, because it serves a higher end" (*SW* 7:14). Such is Fichte's theodicy: everything is necessary, and everything is good, when seen in the higher light of reason, which is absolute knowledge, or God Godself (since knowledge of God and the existence of God cannot be separated from each other, *SW* 7:130). Note that knowledge that God *must be* is certainly not knowledge of what God *is* for Fichte. This is a difference with Hegel that will have profound ramifications for the latter's lectures on the philosophy of religion, for example. Henrich (2003: 273–74) is correct in noting that "Fichte's speculative theology is … a *docta ignorantia*, a learned unknowing. This is another, and significant, reason for looking at his theology as a modern position. It tries, at least, to start from an absolutely undetermined concept of God." Another reason why evil can be subsumed within absolute knowledge of the ultimate plan of the universe is that the specifics of evil are lost within the generalities of the world plan. Knowledge such as the Fichtean philosopher possesses "does not concern itself with individuals and … dwells in the higher sphere of idealized conception" (Fichte *SW* 7:14), a sphere within which only what Hegel will later come to call "world-historical individuals" (Hegel *VPW* 93) have a meaningful impact and play out the intentions of the Fichtean *Weltplan*. But, in keeping with the omniscience of a priori knowing and the omnipotence of the divine world plan, according to Fichte even these individuals are unable to truly affect the course of history. "Time rolls on in the steady course marked out for it from eternity, and individual effort can neither hasten nor retard its progress. Only the cooperation of all, and especially of the indwelling eternal spirit of all times and all worlds, may promote it" (Fichte *SW* 7:15). In the end, humans are unable to alter the world plan to which a priori knowledge gives them access; universal history and universal knowledge unite in the inexorable sweep of the world plan. Philosophers can watch, and understand, but effect no lasting change.

6.2 The origin and limits of history

Having adduced the necessity of the plan of history a priori, Fichte continues *Characteristics of the Present Age* with a series of lectures (lectures two to eight) that outline the basic thrust of the third age, the age in which he and his contemporaries find themselves. These lectures outline what Fichte calls the *scientific* constitution of the third age, its "material" – writing, reading, art, science proper, and other external manifestations. With the ninth lecture, however, he begins to deal with what he terms the *social* conditions of the third age,

the more "spiritual" matters, and this leads him to take up political issues in history, and particularly matters dealing with the origin and constitution of the state, namely, "to what extent the absolute idea of the state is therein expressed and realized, and to what extent it is not" (*SW* 7:128). Technically, he says, lecture nine still belongs to the scientific exposition of the work; with this lecture Fichte outlines the origins of history, as it becomes social in the state, beginning the discussion with what he calls a "metaphysical principle" which will sound strangely familiar to readers of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Fichte gives his historical principle thus: "Whatever actually exists, exists of absolute necessity; and necessarily exists in the precise form in which it does exist; it is impossible that it should not exist, or exist otherwise than it does" (*SW* 7:129). No one who is familiar with Hegel's famous dictum "what is rational is actual; what is actual is rational" (Hegel *Werke* 7:24) could fail to note the similarities between these two formulations of the relationship between reality and reason. However, as I discussed in an earlier chapter, Engels and others point out that Hegel does not advocate an a priori affirmation of the status quo; Fichte, however, certainly seems to do so.

The origin of history amounts to its existence as a mediation of absolute and necessary knowledge. History comes on the scene when philosophers and historians begin to be aware of the succession of ages, and attempt to work out the sequence of events as they appear. The driving force behind these events, the "Object of Knowledge" as Fichte calls God, is at all times and under all circumstances necessary. "Actual existence in time, on the contrary, appears as if it might have been otherwise, and therefore as contingent; but this appearance of changeability arises only from our ignorance" (Fichte *SW* 7:131). Nevertheless, the changeability of history is the very thing that concerns the limited perspective of the historian. Only the philosopher is able to discern the *meaning* of the universal plan which lies beneath the flux of historical events. History itself is only the "record of the unexpected and the new" (*SW* 7:134), whereas absolute reason has always been, giving meaning to the seeming mutability of history and guaranteeing that the supposed losses of human existence are partakers of the fulfillment of universal history. Yet even though cognition of the eternality of the plan is not available to the large share of humanity, historians are warranted in concluding that "the condition of absolute reason must have been somewhere on earth extant" (*SW* 7:133), since reason must enter into even the vicissitudes of history at some level.

The social history of humanity begins with an awareness of this absolute reason as it manifests itself in humanity. Fichte thus does away with all forms of truly progressive philosophy of history. Absolute reason has never been absent from human history, from its beginning, because *ex nihilo nihil fit*: "from nothing, nothing can arise; and thus unreason can never become reason. Hence, at one point in its existence, the human race must have been purely reasonable

in its primitive form" (*SW* 7:133). Fichte does not mean that humanity once existed in some Rousseauian state of innocence. He means that there once existed a people he calls the *Normalvolk*, the Normal People, who lived among the "earth-born savages" of the age and who dispersed reason among them as a sower scatters the seeds (*SW* 7:133). Because Fichte's model of culture is therefore external and not organic (i.e. culture does not grow up among all people equally and gradually), he rejects the idea that anyone could explain history through the explication of culture, "nor the population of the different regions of the earth" (*SW* 7:133). With this, Fichte throws aside more anthropological accounts of culture and the state, such as are found in Herder's work, and later in Hegel. (For Fichte and Schelling, the state is "a mechanism in which free beings are conceived in interaction. The state is designated as an organism in the specific sense only under the influence of Hegel and after the dissociation from Fichte," Schmitt 1986: 112.) Reason does not grow from unreason, as a lotus blossoms gradually from the mud and mulch that nourished it. Reason bursts onto the scene of history in full form, as Athena from the head of Zeus, and only then are the savages of the earth exposed to it and must adopt it as best they can. This is why there is no history of *das Normalvolk* – history as the account of the "unexpected and the new" could never have arisen among them, because they possessed all reason without admixture and were aware of the plan of universal history as it was. According to Fichte's a priori prehistory of the human race, the people of this "absolute culture" were somehow driven from their dwellings and forced into contact with the "seats of barbarism," thus bringing reason to the dwellers in darkness and beginning history proper (Fichte *SW* 7:134–35, 138). Reason must therefore have been highly selective in its universal course to have chosen the *Normalvolk* and overlooked the barbarians who, one assumes, were not and thus could never be a part of a priori history.

History proper therefore originates with the arrival on the scene of a people sufficiently darkened in their comprehension of absolute reason as to need a contingent account of their temporal existence. Everything up to this point (Fichte wisely does not try to name an actual time period for his prehistoric *Normalvolk*) has been the prerequisite of history, but not history itself. An awareness of the necessity of such a prehistorical situation arises from a priori principles: it is *philosophy*. Once these a priori concepts begin to give way to facts, history begins. "History is mere empiricism," Fichte says. "It has nothing but facts to communicate, and all its proofs are founded upon these facts alone" (*SW* 7:136). On account of this reliance on empirical facts, history properly so-called is actually composed of two elements: knowledge of the a priori world plan and application of this knowledge to the a posteriori facts (*SW* 7:139). To the philosopher, the course of the *Weltplan* is "clear without the aid of history at all" (*SW* 7:139), but in order to illustrate the principles of philosophy, the

philosopher will make use of the seeming contingencies of history, because ordinary people can grasp the story of history as a sequence of events, and because the external facts of history are, in fact, the empirical forms of the one universal a priori world plan. Gadamer (1977: 5) calls such an ahistorical stance the "alienation of the historical consciousness – the noble and slowly perfected art of holding ourselves at a critical distance in dealing with witnesses of past life." His philosophy of hermeneutical retrieval, grounded in Heidegger but harking back to Hegel's open-ended historical consciousness, is an attempt, in part, to overcome such alienation and close the historical distance between the world and the observer via the medium of language. The Fichtean philosopher, however, uses history for his or her own purposes and is willing to cast it aside when it is no longer useful for elucidating the inner logic of the *Weltplan*. In fact, the philosopher does not actually need history at all, for history has nothing to do with origins (though it has its own definite origin), and philosophy cares only for the a priori sources of knowledge. The philosopher cannot assert that which has never actually occurred (Antony won the battle of Actium; Napoleon was victorious at Waterloo; Tokugawa's forces were routed at Sekigahara) – the philosopher also dwells within the temporal realm, and is bound to the contingent appearances of the world. But the philosopher knows the truth, and as such is able to assert that which *is*; and should the deep thinker actually arrive at the absolute within the sphere of historical time, "he need not be surprised at this, for only on this account is he a philosopher" (*SW* 7:141). Because the philosopher grasps the a priori principles of history, he already knows all that history contains, or could ever contain, of necessity, including the past, all present epochs, as well as the future.

It follows that Fichte cannot believe that the concrete events of history are actual bearers of knowledge for the philosopher; history can only be the costume which absolute knowledge – God Godself – wears in order to be comprehensible to those for whom philosophical investigation is not an option. History is a mask of God, because it veils the necessity which underlies all historical occurrences, and this necessity is the divine life itself. It is also a mask, because in fact God and man are one in Fichte; or rather, the absence of God requires and makes room for the self-positing *Ich* to found itself, and in its founding, found a world. Carl Schmitt (1988: 57) puts this bluntly:

> Against Fichte, Hegel argued that it would be a violent abstraction to assume that the world had been abandoned by God and was only waiting until mankind could bring a purpose to it … according to an abstract notion of "how things ought to be." An "ought" is impotent. What is right will make itself effective, and what merely should be, without existing, is not true but only a subjective mastery of life.

Schmitt concludes, "The most important advance that the nineteenth century made over the rationalism of the eighteenth rests on this contrast between

Hegel and Fichte." Fichte identifies God with universal necessity, which necessity philosophers access via their a priori knowledge of the world plan. The absolute knowledge of the philosopher therefore includes absolute knowledge of God and the aims of the divine life. God is necessity itself because even God is bound to the needs of necessity. Fichte says, "it is necessity which guides the human race, and not by any means is it a blind necessity, but the living, conscious, intelligent necessity of the divine life … Nothing is as it is, because God wills it so arbitrarily, but because God cannot manifest himself otherwise than as he does" (Fichte *SW* 7:142). In short, for Fichte the origin of history is also the limit of history – the necessary manifestation of God, the divine life, as absolute knowledge and as the universal world plan which historical knowledge grasps imperfectly. History necessarily emerges once absolute reason comes into contact with contingent facts, and history is necessarily unable to transgress the bounds of absolute knowledge in the form of God and the world plan. Fichte lays out a model of God and history which closely resembles the model of God put forward by Spinoza in his *Ethics*, with allowances for Fichte's idealist framework. Even God is bound by rigid and metaphysically determinate necessity – the necessity of the *Ich* – and it is the business of the philosopher to understand and explain this necessity. The business of the historian is to set forth the "actual phenomena of the inconstant and ever changing spheres over which" the universal plan holds sway (*SW* 7:142). From these phenomena emerges the crucial historical factor in the arrangement of human life, and the achievement of absolute knowledge within the flux of historical contingency, namely, the state.

6.3 Freedom and the state

As with individual or particular histories, Fichte is not concerned with any *particular* given state, but with what he terms the "state in its absolute form" (*SW* 7:143). As he moves into his tenth lecture, Fichte begins to outline the relationship between the individual and the state in ways that reveal his understanding of political and ontological freedom, perhaps the true theme of the entire lecture series (recall that Fichte states as his goal to demonstrate that the τέλος of human life is "that in this life [humans] may order all their relations with *freedom*, according to *reason*," *SW* 7:7). But what does Fichte mean by "state in its absolute form"? He states it plainly at the outset of his essay: "In our opinion, the absolute state is in its form an artificial institution [*eine künstliche Anstalt*] which is intended to direct all individual powers towards the overall life of the human race and to fuse them together therein, and thus to realize and manifest in individual life the general form of the idea [*die Form der Idee*]" (*SW* 7:144). What Fichte means by calling the absolute state an "artificial institution" is telling; he uses the term *künstliches* in its sense of

cunning or artifice. The art of nature, as he calls is, is the means by which the human race is guided towards its destiny without its knowledge. The order of the universe is to follow the universal *Weltplan*, and this order is the a priori condition for any and all human historicity. "But there is also an order in nature," Fichte says, "that is, in the destiny of the human race, through which it is led towards its true end without its own knowledge or will – which order might be called the art of nature [*die Kunst der Natur*]" (*SW* 7:144). It is in this sense that the state is an "artistic" institution, in that it guides the will and destiny of humanity towards its own ends.

Though Fichte's idea that the state is a human creation intended to fuse together the various ends humans pursue, it would be a mistake to equate it with the Hobbesian notion of a social contract. Fichte's absolute state requires human input only at later stages of its development, whereas Hobbes is clear that the contractual commonwealth is the rational creation of men and women as a means to escape the brutal state of nature (Hobbes, *Leviathan* II.xvii.13–14). Moreover, Fichte's absolute state is organic, despite (or perhaps because of) its artificial or *künstliches* nature. It is certainly not a rational agreement created by people who lay aside their own rights to a powerful third party of their own creation for mutual protection and flourishing. Fichte's notion of the absolute state is idealistic, not contractarian. With the later emergence in the *Weltplan* of reason as the liberation from instinct as well as external authority (i.e. in the third age, the age of Fichte and his world), humanity begins to take upon itself the realization of the plan, though it is never free to alter it. Rather, humanity comes to see itself more and more in the development of the plan, and consciously becomes itself through the outworking of the plan. It is difficult not to see in this some prefiguring of one of Hegel's most controversial ideas in his own philosophy of history, namely *die List der Vernunft* or the infamous "cunning of reason" which supposedly uses humanity as its tool as it works out the goals of history (Hegel *Werke* 8 §209; 12:49). Fichte is much less ambiguous about the power dynamics within the relationship between history, the state, and individuals than Hegel is. Still, these relationships are not in fact completely asymmetrical in Hegel, because the motions and currents of history are collaborative efforts which find their fulfillment only in the free actions of the human race. For Fichte, these actions are circumscribed by the a priori plan of world history, which of necessity cannot take into account individual actions or even be truly aware of them. But this is very far from Hegel's position, as Croce (1915: 196) long ago pointed out: "Hegel has not abandoned the individual to poets and historians: he thought the philosophy of the individual, when he thought the philosophy of nature and history."

Fichte's identification of the destiny of the human race with the plan realized by the state is not coincidental to his overall idea of world history. On the contrary, the state itself is a "completed whole" in which "its common purpose

is identical with that of the human race, [and thus] it must regard the aggregate of its citizens as the human race itself" (Fichte *SW* 7:145). The purposes of the race and the purposes of the state ultimately coincide, for the state directs the fulfillment of the human race and/as its own fulfillment; there is no difference in the two statements, according to Fichte (*SW* 7:145). The race's goal is the state; the state's goal is itself. To be sure, individuals make up the state. The state must take into account all the individuals which make it up, for the state is an organic whole which embraces all the individuals within it and yet transcends them. In order to be fair to Fichte, it is crucial to understand that he is not advocating or describing a totalitarian existence in which the needs of the many are ultimately subverted by the goals of the one universal state. He is quite clear, for example, that the state must take into account individuals *qua* individuals – "First, *all individuals*, without exception, should be embraced and taken into account by the state. Second, every individual with all his individual powers, without exception or reserve, should likewise be taken into account" (*SW* 7:145) – and such statements are not isolated exceptions but found throughout *Grundzüge*. Yet it has to be said that the "taking into account" which Fichte has in mind is a situation in which everyone works as one towards the achievement of the goals of the human race, which are in fact the goals of the state, namely freedom, in accordance with reason, as noted earlier. Indeed, "in the state, each individual employs his powers, not for his own immediate enjoyment, but for the purpose of the race, and he receives in return the entire united culture of the human race, and therewith his own honorable subsistence" (*SW* 7:146). Hence the goals of the state embrace the activities, needs, and desires of individuals, but by them (via its cunning artfulness) achieves its own ends, showing in the end that the state embraces individuals, but is more than them – the state is greater than the sum of its parts, though it needs the parts to be what it is.

In no sense could Fichte's a priori organic state, at least as outlined in *Grundzüge*, allow for an idea, discussed earlier, such as Hobbes puts forward in *Leviathan* II.xxi.21: "The obligation of subjects to the sovereign is understood to last as long, and no longer, than the power lasteth by which he is able to protect them. For the right men have by nature to protect themselves, when none else can protect them, can by no covenant be relinquished." Because according to Fichte the state is not a covenant or social contract, but an organic manifestation of the divine *Weltplan*, all notions of obligation and relinquishing are irrelevant. At the same time, one should not mistake Fichte's absolute state in this text with Aristotle's conception of the state. The *πόλις* is an organic whole, but it is teleological rather than ideal; that is, it finds its meaning in its end, not in its beginning. Most importantly, both Aristotle and Hobbes undertake to outline and defend a particular understanding of human politics and ethics, which is not Fichte's actual concern in this text at all. His organic state is neither a contractarian utopia nor a teleological whole, but rather a concrete

manifestation of the metaphysical unity of the divine *Weltplan*. "The state is an unseen idea, in itself … It is not single individuals, but their continuous relationship with each other" (Fichte *SW* 7:146). This is what it means to say that Fichte, like Hegel after him, has an organic notion of the state. But Hegel's organicism is closer to Aristotle than Fichte – and none of them rests easy with a social contract model.

Fichte's conception of the state in *Characteristics of the Present Age* is not the bald exercise of power leading to *oppression*, defined by Iris Marion Young as "structural phenomena that immobilize or reduce a group" (Young 1988: 272). Quite the contrary, the state itself exists to fulfill the aims and goals of the individuals within it (those aims being understood as a priori necessities, of course, and not Aristotelian teleological ends). At the same time, it is fair to ask, with Young, "what makes a group?" She says, "To be in a group is to share with others a way of life that defines a person's identity and by which other people identify him or her" (272) – a statement with which Fichte would agree. Young goes on to distinguish between group identity as aggregational and associational; to belong to a group is to be classified by a shared attribute, or to belong by means of willful participation. The former is to belong to an aggregate, the latter, an association. The Fichtean notion of a group is clearly aggregational (here it is closer to Aristotle and further from Hobbes). Members are such by virtue of their shared attributes and shared recognition; in the case of Fichte's philosophy of history, their shared dedication to the purposes of the race which are fulfilled in the culture of the state. On this reading, however organic Fichte's state is, it can be little more than an exercise of domination by the state upon its aggregate members. To disassociate from the state is either not an option or a retrograde movement of culture. But one must be careful in making statements such as these. Fichte's notion of aggregation is more "existential" than straightforwardly political. In other words, Fichte has a feeling that humans find themselves, as Heidegger says (and as Young notes approvingly), "thrown" into a world (Heidegger *SZ* §29:135), and to realize their place in that world, they must understand themselves as part of the group which defines their individuality. That group, ultimately, in the third of Fichte's ages, is the state, and the absolute state is one in which the desires and designs of the group (of individuals) are aimed wholeheartedly at the goals of the state. This will be an important point for Hegel as well, especially as he uses it to map the rise and decline of spirit in various cultures.

For Fichte, the notions of individual and state are drawn much less sharply than for Hegel. This is why Fichte says that "in a perfect state, no just individual purpose can exist which is not included in the purpose of the community, and for the attainment of which the community does not provide" (Fichte *SW* 7:148). It is not that the state disallows contrary desires and diverse trajectories, but rather that in a perfect state, the will of the people and the will of the

state (the many and the one) coincide to such a degree that one is the other, inseparably. This may well be utopian, but as it is framed, it is certainly not totalitarian. It is also why Fichte is able to posit the state as a necessity, while at the same time proposing that human work is what is needed to achieve this absolute state. "To raise themselves with freedom to this absolute state, as one of the conditions imposed by reason on the human race, is humanity's vocation," according to Fichte (*SW* 7:148). Freedom, in this case, is manifested in a communal activity, the action of humanity in accordance with reason to achieve its highest aims, and only obtainable in the state, which is alien to both *Normalvolk* (because unnecessary) and the "earth-born savages" (because impossible). Only temporal historical existence – history proper – can realize it. *Der Weltplan*, which is known a priori, requires the emergence of temporal history in order to make actual that which is eternally real in the knowledge of God. It is not the teleological realization of a gradual plan; rather, it is the complete actualization of a predetermined course of events, apprehended by means of philosophical knowledge without any necessary reference to actual occasions. Naturally, Fichte acknowledges that that which happens in history well and truly happens (Fichte's Idealism is not *modal*, as it were, dealing with possibility and probability no matter what the case, but *transcendental*, dealing with necessary conditions that are and must be the case), but its happening is according to necessary and knowable a priori laws of reason and divinity, which are ultimately the same thing for Fichte in *Characteristics of the Present Age*.

The absolute state is the goal of Fichtean human life. At the same time, the "first condition" of such a state "is this: that those that are free must first become subject to the will and superintendence of the others [*daß nur erst Freie dem Willen, und der Aufsicht Anderer unterworfen werden*]" (*SW* 7:149). A reciprocal subjugation of the will among free members of the community is a characteristic of the absolute state, as in some form of social contract theory (communities only survive insofar as members contract among themselves to abide by mutually agreed upon limitations; echoes of Hobbes). However, Fichte is unwilling to be more prescriptive than this, and his organic a priori notion of the state precludes many details. Indeed, Fichte is willing to entertain that there are various "legitimate" forms that the state could take, though only one of them will manifest the absolute form of the state. One form the state takes is that of the relationship between the rulers and the ruled (*SW* 7:150), wherein there is no equality of rights and powers. The role of the servant and the master are absolute, and though there does exist some level of reciprocity (humans are always existentially free in the Stoic sense), the state extends no external, positive freedom to the ruled. Under these conditions, the ruled are "perfect slaves" as Fichte calls them ("*der erstere müsste sie nemlich sodann ganz zu Sklaven machen*"), and the rulers are perfect rulers, with no mobility

between classes. The subjugation here is not the absolute subjugation of the many to the purposes of the one, but a forced subjugation. In this situation, the state would "cease to deserve the name" (*SW* 7:150).

The second form the state may take is what Fichte calls the "negative subjugation" of the parts to the whole, wherein there is some quality of rights and powers (*SW* 7:150). In this form, all members are subject to the purpose of the whole, but much of the subjugation is external. Not all are freely dedicated to the aims of the whole, but arrive at their dedication through the exercise of duties, which delineate boundaries and are thus manifestations of negative freedom. The presence of rights-language indicates that some level of equality has entered the scene, but the rights themselves are by no means equally understood or equally applied. Rights-language is necessary because many still pursue their own ends; in the absence of selfish pursuits, rights are superfluous. This is the final form the state can take, according to Fichte in *Grundzüge* – the form of the "positive subjugation" of the parts to the whole, wherein there is total equality, because the aims of all have become equally focused upon the achievement of the goals of the entire community. "It is obvious that in such a constitution, all the powers of men are taken into account for the common purpose … and that therefore in this constitution is manifested the absolute form of the state [*in dieser Verfassung die absolute Form des Staats ausgedruckt ist*], and a true equality of rights and powers begins" (*SW* 7:151). Fichte taught that his own time (the third age of humankind) had attained the second form of the state, the form of negative subjugation, and that it had gone some way towards manifesting the perfect form, though it was still far from grasping it absolutely (*SW* 7:152). The three forms of the state are as close as Fichte will come in *Grundzüge* to advocating some form of progressive history, which Fichte rejects in principle. For example, he insists "There is nothing against which either history or a certain half-philosophy should more carefully guard itself than the utterly irrational and fruitless attempt to raise unreason to reason by a gradual lessening of its degree; and, given, a sufficient range of centuries, to produce from an orangutan a Leibniz or a Kant!" (*SW* 7:134). Reason exists absolutely, and cannot contain any admixture of progress or regress. However, human history is the tale, not of the increase of reason (which can never grow or decrease), but of the *attainment* of reason by those who once lacked it.

> For the rationalism of the Enlightenment, man was by nature ignorant and rough, but educable. It was thus on pedagogic grounds that the ideal of a "legal despotism" was justified: Uneducated humanity is educated by a legislator (who, according to Rousseau's *Social Contract*, was able to "change the nature of man"); or unruly nature could be conquered by Fichte's "tyrant," and the state became, as Fichte said with naive brutality, an "educational factory." (Schmitt 2005: 56)

Schmitt's assessment of Fichtean education is harsh; but if this is "progress," it is of a peculiarly hit-and-miss variety, since according to Fichte the various forms of society and states can and do coexist within the same age of humanity. Freedom is always there for the taking, though not all will grasp it, or are able to do so.

Finally, Fichte makes a distinction between *political* and *civil* freedom, based on his understanding that all three forms the state may take are legitimate in and of themselves, though not all achieve the absolute form of positive subjugation. Civil (*bürgerliche*) freedom is that which is guaranteed to all through the constitution of the state. "In the absolute form of the state … each individual binds all others just insofar as he is bound by them: all have equal civil rights and civil freedom, and each individual is thus at once a complete citizen and a complete subject" (Fichte *SW* 7:153). The first form of the state lacks this arrangement altogether. The second form has it imperfectly, and this is Fichte's own age and time. In this third form, the absolute form of the state, civil rights and civil freedoms are universal. Civil freedoms have to do with the constitution or make-up of the state, and are abstract, determined by reason alone (*SW* 7:154). Political (*politisch*) freedom, however, has to do with the particular form of government, and this sort of freedom can take many different and legitimate forms, according to Fichte. "Therefore, only the form of the state is determined by reason, and its realization absolutely required, but by no means the form of government [*keinesweges aber die der Regierungsverfassung*]" (*SW* 7:155), indicating that for Fichte, the *state* is not the same thing as the *government*, a crucial distinction that will be shared by Hegel, Marx, Schmitt, and others. According to Hegel, "Initially a nation is not a state, and the transition of a family, tribe, kinship group, mass, etc. to the condition of a state is the formal realization of the idea in general within it" (Hegel *Werke* 7 §349). Nations become states when they realize *die Idee* which they themselves have as a unique group, and manifest that idea on the world stage. Each nation has a role to play (*Werke* 7 §346), and it plays this role once in history (*Werke* 7 §347), whereupon the world spirit transitions into a new form, in a new nation. For Fichte the state is a *Lebensform*, a way of life that orients all its members and to which allegiance is owed; it is that form of life which is most reasonable for a given time and place, as long as it leads to the realization of freedom.

Any number of governmental forms can realize a state, however, and even freedom is a negotiable commodity within a legitimate state. Ideally, freedom is available to all in terms of equality and rights (what Fichte calls *bürgerliche Freiheit*, civil rights). "Civil freedom, and that to an equal degree, is absolutely required for all men; but political freedom is, at most, only necessary for one [*der politischen Freiheit aber bedarf es höchstens nur für Einen*]" (Fichte *SW* 7:155). If what Fichte means by this is that, descriptively speaking, all any form of government requires is that one person – a

monarch, a theocrat, etc. – be free, he is correct. However, if he is offering a prescriptive account of human freedom, such that the realization of political freedom by one is sufficient, he will run afoul of his own requirements that positive subjugation characterize the absolute state. Fichte does not believe that civil freedom and political freedom are directly tied together, and there is no reason to think that Fichte would find, say, absolute monarchy incompatible with civil freedoms as he understands them. Fichte and Hobbes share an outlook here, though Fichte sees the state as organic rather than contractual. Fichte himself was a constitutional monarchist like most thinkers of his generation, and advocated for civil freedoms. But in any event, Fichte's distinction between civil and political freedom is not one that Hegel will accept in its prescriptive form, though Hegel also advocates for an organic form of the state oriented around freedom and, crucially for Hegel, *Sittlichkeit*. Hegel himself famously asserts in his "one, some, and all" statement that the arrival on the scene of freedom heralds the overthrow of the despotism of the one, in both the civil and political realms (Hegel *Werke* 12:31). Fichte affirms the theoretical distinction of freedoms; Hegel will deny it – freedom is all of a piece, or it is a sham, for Hegel, though it follows its own inner logic for Hegel as it does for Fichte.

Having outlined the conditions under which freedom can arise in history according to reason, Fichte devotes the remainder of his lectures to a historical account of the various forms of the state, leading up to his own day. The state as such begins in central Asia (lecture twelve), "the cradle of the existence of the entire human race" (Fichte *SW* 7:174). From thence the development of the state moves westwards, through the Near East, and into Greece, and the discovery of what Snell (1953: 246ff.) calls *humanitas*. It was in Greece that equality as such came into history for the first time, for "what the Greeks sought, and what they obtained, was equality of *right* [*Gleicheit des Rechts*]," if not equality of *rights* (*Gleicheit der Rechte*), for all citizens (Fichte *SW* 7:178). From the Macedonians, the Romans took up the Grecian ideal of culture and, combining it with a talent for war and administration, forged a truly universal empire. According to Fichte, "It was these Romans who united in one the culture which had now been produced by the mingling of different races and the state, and who, in so doing, brought to an end the whole of ancient time" (*SW* 7:183), preparing the stage for the coming of the next great achievement of culture and state, the Christian kingdoms of Europe. Rome itself is eventually supplanted by Christianity (a new Rome from the old Rome), with its new understanding of human freedom, based on moral autonomy and the divine-human relationship (lecture thirteen). "In the view of … Christianity, humanity is the one, visible, forceful, living, and independent existence of God; or, assuming one does not misconstrue the statement, the singular manifestation and outflowing of the same" (*SW* 7:188).

Fichte combines the cultural flowering of the Christian West with an incarnational theology which sees humanity and God as essentially one – in terms

of traditional theology, though Fichte does not mention this, such an identification comes about through the incarnation of Christ. Hegel, interestingly, makes a very similar claim in his lectures on the philosophy of religion. There, Hegel says, the incarnation "is the appearance of a human being in sensual presence; God in sensual presence can take no other shape than that of a human being. In the sensual and mundane order, only the human is spiritual. So if the spiritual is to have a sensual shape, it must be a human shape" (Hegel *VPR* 3:239). Both Fichte and Hegel view the Christian tradition of incarnational theology as the key to comprehending the emergence of a human consciousness in history that knows itself to be free *an sich*. To be free absolutely is a possibility for Fichte, though not for Hegel. Fichte sees that existential freedom is attained through the encounter with the *Anstoß*, the other that is within the *Ich* and which allows the *Ich* to posit itself absolutely (whether this is actual freedom as such is another matter). This positing is a movement of self-reflexive objectivity for Fichte: "'In itself' means 'not for us' ['*An sich*' *bedeutet* '*nicht für uns*']. As absolute, I think that which is not relative as such. Yet the not-relative is relative to the absolute itself, namely in relation to its opposite, the relation that negates thought" (Janke 2000: 62). A religion that offers incarnational freedom is one that is able to bind the people to the nation in an organic rather than contractual sense. Fichte says that such a religion has a "positive influence" upon the state, and establishes "an absolute equality in personal as well as civil freedom, in respect of *rights* as well as *right* [*in Ansehung des Rechts und der Recht*]" (Fichte *SW* 7:189). The goal of equal rights as well as equal right, and thus complete freedom in an ideal if not actual sense, is achieved by the Christian nations of Europe, and the efforts to make that ideality a reality is the continuing work of Fichte's own day, by means of laws (lecture fourteen), public morality (lecture fifteen), and public religion (lecture sixteen), concluding with a summary lecture outlining the successes and failures of the previous offerings (lecture seventeen).

6.4 History and philosophical necessity

Fichte concludes his *Characteristics of the Present Age* with the following statement, which sums up both the aims and the achievements of his attempt at outlining a philosophy of history (*SW* 7:238):

> In the preceding lectures we have explained this ongoing age as a necessary component of our race's life on earth within the great world plan, and have unlocked its secret significance; we have also sought to understand the phenomena of the present time by means of this concept, to construe them as being necessary results of the past, and to predict their coming consequences for the future; and insofar as we have been successful, we have grasped our present time.

All of Fichte's important themes are contained within this succinct statement. The present age is a necessary manifestation of the *Weltplan* which is available to philosophy through a priori reason; its secret significance is that all events – past, present, and future – are contained within the universal idea which is grasped a priori and which is seen through the a posteriori facts of temporal history. History in the past may be understood in terms of what *must have occurred* based on the needs of the *Weltplan* as we know it (Fichte's *Normalvolk* are an excellent example). The present, also, is rendered transparent to the philosopher, since she possesses the a priori plan and is thus able to comprehend all that occurs even before it happens: not the mass of finite events, which are merely shadows of the universal plan, but the inner truth and beauty of the design of providence itself, which is always complete, necessary, and inexorable. Furthermore, the future itself is circumscribed by the a priori plan of time, and all possible future epochs are laid bare before the one who is able to understand this necessary plan of time (*SW* 7:5–6). The future is bereft of novelty, as surely as the past is, once the philosopher has got around to understanding a priori the notion of universal time and the necessity of the divine life.

To be sure, there is a sense in which such a bereavement removes fear, for the future can hold no surprises for one who has grasped it in such a complete way. History does not end, but at the same time, it can contain nothing new for those who study it and who act upon its stage. Fichte insists that his theory is not the product of this or any other age, but is the very truth itself. How is this the case? Because, Fichte says, at base his theory of history is a religious one, namely that "one must regard all life as a necessary development of the one, primordial, perfectly good and blessed life" (*SW* 7:240–41). Fichte equates religion, metaphysics, and the a priori, and says that whoever despises one, despises them all (*SW* 7:241). A priori knowledge, defined religiously and understood metaphysically (as what Fichte calls the supra-sensual), places the development of human history beyond chance, blind necessity, or evil, all of which entail "the captivity and timidity of the apparent [*dieser Gefangenheit und Befangenheit in den Erscheinungen*]" (*SW* 7:241). For Fichte, his theory of history "transcends the limits of time" because it is ultimately founded upon a priori reason and guaranteed by divine goodness (*SW* 7:240–41). As a piece of essentially rationalist philosophy of religion, Fichte's statements about divine providence are closer to the work of Leibniz or, strikingly, even Descartes than to anything his contemporaries were producing. Compare Fichte's arguments for trust in reason grounded on the divine goodness with Descartes's arguments that God is not a deceiver in his *Meditations III* and *IV* (Descartes 1972 I:171–72). Descartes offers a rational proof in support of an ethical truth, and Fichte an ethical truth in support of a rational proof, but they agree in essentially every detail. Fichte concludes by saying that "future growth in inner

peace and blessedness, as well as inward understanding, can alone give proof that the doctrine set forth herein is true, has had an effect upon us, and has sprung to life within us " (Fichte *SW* 7:253). Divine goodness guarantees, and the further growth of the fruits of the philosophy of history (assured by the eternal existence of a priori reason) will prove, that Fichte's discussion of the philosophy of history is not empty verbiage, but the very grasp of the eternal principles which philosophy and history have long sought.

Fichte's thought represents one form of the move to reinterpret and assimilate Kant to which Hegel felt it his duty to respond, especially the matter of Fichte's claim that philosophical history is strictly an a priori matter (*SW* 7:5–6) – something usually alleged against Hegel's own philosophical method. However, Hegel specifically eschews a priori approaches to history, if this means forcing the events of history into preconceived and predetermined avenues of development. Hegel's teleological view of time does not allow for such a static conception, and this is best seen by undertaking a study of what an a priori system of history might look like. Fichte supplies such a system. A comparison of Fichte's and Hegel's methods of construing philosophy of history demonstrates that Hegel is far more concerned with a definition of freedom in history that deals with reciprocity and a real historical/temporal process than is Fichte, though Hegel is unwilling to remain within the historical limits set by Herder. Fichte's *Characteristics of the Present Age* should be seen as an example of the sort of philosophy of history that later philosophy has rightly guarded against, though this does not excuse the neglect accorded to this series of lectures, if for no other reason than that greater knowledge of these lectures might go a long way towards rehabilitating Hegel's philosophy of history. By outlining a system in which the actual events of history are of little import to the actual "deeper meaning" of history, Fichte renders the study of real history irrelevant (surely an important matter to the philosopher who takes actual *history* as his subject). This would be of little more than historical interest to anyone but scholars of German Idealism, if it were not that these very accusations have been leveled from the beginning against Hegel's philosophy of history, which has had and continues to have a much wider and more profound effect on thinking than has Fichte's thought. Indeed, the reader only slightly familiar with Hegel's philosophy might well be justified in seeing Fichte as the immediate precursor and greatest influence upon Hegel's own thoughts about history, since they supposedly share so many assumed qualities: an emphasis on the a priori power of reason and logic, a common belief that history is ruled by powers unseen by and unconcerned with the actual lives of human actors on the world stage; and a firm belief that the state is the greatest power on earth – that it is rational, and that its actions alone manifest reason on the earth. While these considerations do describe Fichte's philosophy of history in its details as well as its broad outlines, they do Hegel no justice.

What is required is an assessment of Hegel's philosophy of history in light of the tradition he received concerning history considered philosophically. Herder sets the stage for virtually all later attempts to get at history in a philosophical manner in Germany. Moreover, Herder and Fichte were popular writers whose works had a measurable impact on their times and the thinkers who followed them. Fichte's lectures in *Characteristics of the Present Age* are an excellent example of that species of educated popularizing which so affected the thinking classes of his age; Herder's *Adrastea* articles are another. For its own part, Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* have long served as a popular introduction to his work in German-speaking lands, and as such all three philosophers have a similar goal in mind with their philosophical writing on history: they are attempting to get at the very issues that matter most to their readers, matters of recent history and of perennial concerns. Finally, what Hegel actually says about the "end of history," and history itself, is not fully appreciated unless one has some frame of reference by which to measure it. On the one hand, there is Herder's refusal to entertain any serious historical philosophy which transgresses the bounds of local, individual, particular history. On the other is Fichte's grand transcendental subjectivism, which must submit all historical facts to the one a priori knowledge available to philosophy, without recourse to actual events or actual history. In the next chapter I outline an interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of history that treads a path between these two visions of philosophical history, one that relies upon the historical unfolding of actual history, but at the same time is able to understand these events as *real* events within a universal model of reason that is sufficient to explain their meanings, while allowing them to keep their individuality. I cannot attempt an explication of the whole of Hegel's philosophy of history in this single study. But by relating Hegel's philosophy of history to the goals and limits laid out by Herder and Fichte, I will be able to show what Hegel means by history, the state, and freedom, and (more importantly for this particular study) to understand what Hegel actually says about the end of history and the future.

7 Hegel and history

> If history is the locus of meaning, then to rely on it is like trying to hold on to the waves in a shipwreck.
>
> Jan Patočka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, 1996

> The life of nature is the process of this moment.
>
> G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*

7.1 Plotting history backwards

The rise and fall of great empires is a perennial topic for historians of ideas. As an empire grows and establishes itself, a sense of momentum and inevitability inexorably intrudes itself upon the thoughts and feelings of the populace. Notions of destiny or of divine favor begin to appear in the communities within the empire, and soon the actions which gave rise to the destinal assertions are themselves taken over by those assertions, and the progress of empire becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. We are chosen, because we triumph – we triumph, because we are chosen; once this fateful back-and-forth begins, any major shift in the trajectory of the fortunes of empire must call forth explanations for what has happened, for good or for ill. When such explanations claim to get at the "truths behind the events" as it were, they become "meta-accounts," attempts at explaining the finite by the infinite, or the contingent by the necessary. One of the first, and still one of the greatest and most influential, attempts at a meta-account of human history in the West was written by St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) in his seminal work *De civitate dei*, or *The City of God*. In this work, written as the Roman Empire crumbled under the combined weight of internal rot and external invasions, Augustine proposed to explain the events of secular history, particularly the recent sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410, by way of the theological history understood by Catholic faith to begin with the creation of the world by God and to end with the consummation of time and the return of Christ.

In order to explain the ongoing political strife in the empire in terms his Christian audience could understand, Augustine "distributed the human race into

two parts, the one consisting of those who live according to man, the other of those who live according to God. And these we also mystically call the two cities [*quas etiam mystice appellamus ciuitates duas*], or the two communities of men, of which one is predestined to reign eternally with God, and the other to suffer eternal punishments with the devil" (*City of God* XV §1). By laying out the history and destiny of humanity in terms of the metaphor of the two cities, Augustine is able to offer an explanation to the Romans for the defeat of their city: they depended upon the pagan gods for succor (books I–X), but only those who belong to the eternal City of God can hope for salvation (books XI–XXII). The City of Man is eternally opposed to the City of God, from its foundation; the course of the interactions of these two cities traces the course of human history from its beginning in the mythic past, to its end in the fiery consummation of the return of Christ. The City of Man begins in fratricide (the murder of Remus by Romulus) and ends in destruction (*City of God* XV §5; XIX §28), whereas the City of God begins in fratricide (the murder of Abel by Cain, Gen. 4:1–16) and ends in glorification and peace (Rev. 21:1–4).[1] By mapping theological history on to observed human history, Augustine is able to tell a story with immense explanatory power, while at the same time bequeathing to the Christian world of the future a means by which theological time and historical time are able to be explicated in terms of each other. Though Voltaire writes the first philosophy of history as such, the idea for this type of intellectual endeavor enters the Western Christian consciousness through Augustinian thought, whose teleology is as Platonic as it is biblical.

The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century appearance of philosophies of history is another example of the occurrence of meta-accounts triggered by the rise and fall of great empires. In the case of many Enlightenment philosophies of history (such as Voltaire's 1756 *Essai*), the "empire" was an intellectual one; human reason had triumphed once and for all over religious superstition, so the tale went, and new accounts were needed to explain the new world. The various German philosophies of history which led up to and culminated in Hegel's work drew on this intellectual tradition as well, but had the added historical impetus of the revolutions of the 1780s–1790s and the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in the Napoleonic Wars to urge them onwards. Much like Augustine, Hegel was writing of the promise of a new age in the face of the death of an old

[1] *Scriptum est itaque de Cain, quod condiderit ciuitatem; Abel autem tamquam peregrinus non condidit. Superna est enim sanctorum ciuitas, quamuis hic pariat ciues, in quibus peregrinatur, donec regni eius tempus adueniat, cum congregatura est omnes in suis corporibus resurgentes, quando eis promissum dabitur regnum, ubi cum suo principe rege saeculorum sine ullo temporis fine regnabunt.*

Accordingly, it is recorded of Cain that he built a city, but Abel, being a sojourner, built none. For the city of the saints is above, although here below it begets citizens, in whom it sojourns till the time of its reign arrives, when it shall gather together all in the day of the resurrection; and then shall the promised kingdom be given to them, in which they shall reign with their Prince, the King of the ages, time without end. (Augustine, *City of God* XV §1)

one. For Augustine, the decay was located in the Roman Empire, while Hegel saw the looming end of autocracy in France and Germany as the sign of the coming consummation (to the end of his life, Hegel is reported to have drunk a toast to Bastille Day every year). In both cases, the end of a historical order which had seemed immortal and impervious to change elicited the need to explain the entirety of what had happened, and why, in historical terms as well as in terms of the intellectual framework each valued most. For Augustine, this was Christian theology, and so he produced a theology of history. For Hegel, theology had given way to speculative philosophy, though both treated of the same things in different ways (religion and philosophy have the same object according to Hegel, *VPR* 1:63). Yet Hegel's was always a Christian speculative philosophy, insofar as his philosophy never truly freed itself from the trajectories established so long ago by Augustine and others.

Creation, providence, incarnation, judgment, consummation – these are the categories with which Hegel sets out to explain history, but these categories are changed by Hegelian philosophy into loci of absolute reason and spirit. The unknown and unknowable divine providence which religious piety had meekly affirmed in the past is revealed in Hegelian thought to be the very manifestation of absolute reason itself. In this sense, Hegel plays the role of a philosophical St. Paul, declaring that "the one whom you have worshiped in ignorance, that one I now proclaim to you" (Acts 17:23). Hegel's activity as an apostle of absolute spirit is as one that speaks only to his own time; he is neither a divine prognosticator nor a fortune-teller, but understands himself to be one who announces the appearance of the divine in his own time, which is "what we call in philosophy the idea [*die Idee*]," the "the eternal inner life of God" (Hegel *VPW* 91) and which expresses itself as thought, as nature, and as spirit. As thought, *die Idee* is pure and manifests as reason. As nature, *die Idee* is expressed in the physical world. And as spirit, *die Idee* attains its absolute sense in human society. In none of these forms, however, is *die Idee* able to transgress the bounds of actuality, including the not-yet existent future. For Hegel, reason never simply appears as such. As with all things for Hegel, reason is a mediated concept, which comes into its own within the forms of human cultural life. Reason is a form of reflexive recognition; it knows itself knowing itself within the sphere of human life and striving. As such, "what reason is to recognize is thus a matter for the enculturation of thought and especially a matter for philosophy" (Fulda 1968: 41), because philosophy is the grasp of the infinite within the finite. However, this juxtaposition of finitude and infinitude is not an opposition or Hegelian "bad infinity," wherein there is a crude subject–object dichotomy. Rather, it is the sort of infinite in which "the end keeps on delaying its arrival – something that for Hegel is not merely an untruth but a truth as well" (Gadamer 1996: 40). The trajectory of history ("the intention of the world") is the proper business of the philosophy of history

(Hegel *VPW* 52), but within philosophy proper this intention or end is never fully realized; its path may be divined, but its realization awaits the movement of the future. However sanguine Hegel may be about the power of reason to know the inner workings of history, his eye is always looking to the past as it effects the present, never to the future or how the world must be.

Hegel's role in casting his eye backwards over the sweep of history and declaring its meaning by way of his own philosophy is why Karl Löwith (1957: 58) called Hegel a "prophet in reverse." Given the prevalence of the "end of history" interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of history, Löwith's characterization might be seen as an unusual one. Nevertheless, Löwith is correct, because even though Hegel does, in fact, herald a new apotheosis of history cum progress, he does not venture to offer suggestions as to the further course of history. Löwith (1957: 58) says that Hegel wrote as though he were "surveying and justifying the ways of the spirit by its successive successes." But the sense of progress or success which Hegel had was of a very particular sort, quite different from that of his predecessors or contemporaries. To return to the comparison with St. Augustine, what is "really real" as it were for Augustine is the theology of history, with history being the stage upon which theological truths play themselves out. Hegel does not have such a passive notion of actual history; in this sense, Hegel is closer to Herder's opinion of human history as the actual events themselves. What is "really real" for Hegel is the actuality of philosophical reason in history; the *philosophy* of history as it were. History is not a stage upon which reason plays out its preordained designs (this is a common misconception about Hegel's "cunning of reason"). On the contrary, history is a very real place with real losses and visceral twists of contingency, and even though Hegel clearly states that the purpose of philosophical enquiry into history is the elimination of contingency (Hegel *VPW* 29) or *Zufälligkeit*, it is by contingency that history resolves itself into necessity. That is, reason is not realized in history in spite of the vicissitudes of human acts on the world stage, but because of such acts and through such acts.

Hegel is able to combine the historical insights of Herder and the speculative designs of Fichte into a single vision of human history. Herder's great insight into a philosophical account of history is that in order to get at any sort of meaning in history, one has to focus on the facts of history themselves, without any specific or detailed hermeneutical framework, which would inevitably lead one to place the events of history on the Procrustean bed of preconceived ideas. As Herder insists, the actual "plan of history" is unknowable, or knowable only via revealed religion in its bare outlines. Hegel agrees with Herder that the facts and events of history are of crucial importance, but Hegel transgresses the boundaries of thought set by Herder when he teaches that history is transparent to philosophical reason, as does Fichte. In fact, Hegel also has close affinities with Fichte, whose philosophical focus was on the so-called

Weltplan itself, which is the a priori subject matter of philosophy and is clear to the philosopher "without the aid of history at all" (Fichte *SW* 7:139). Like Fichte, Hegel agrees that speculative philosophy can and does have access to the innermost workings of the plan of history *up to the present age*, though this insight is not gained through any a priori knowing. Of course, the language of a "plan" can be easily misunderstood. Hegel uses such language, but its meaning is often obscured both by the larger context of philosophy of history as well as the religious essence of Hegel's philosophy. Fichte's philosophy of history, for example, understands the *Weltplan* to be exactly that; a blueprint which history follows and which God has ordained and human reason can know a priori. And Hegel uses the language of a rational plan of history and divine providence interchangeably throughout his philosophy. But Hegel does not mean what Fichte means. What has to be kept in mind is the way in which Hegel understands philosophical language to partake in the truth of poetic and religious language while raising it to a higher level and cancelling out its obscurities and mythologies; that is, the language of a plan is suspended (*aufhebt*) in the language of philosophy. Hegel's language is always at least partially theological: Hegel speaks of a "plan" because traditional Christian language speaks of a "plan." Still, accurately comprehending the Hegelian *Aufhebung* saves us from misapprehending Hegel's plan-language as a patronizing nod to vulgar usage. What piety calls a plan is the inner logic of the concept working itself out in terms of its immanent self-becoming.

Consequently, there is nothing *outside* of history, or religious life, or human experience, that is pulling strings or moving pieces on a cosmic map. The concept becomes what it is in and through the changes and chances of history, religion, experience, and *thought* – hence the longest quotation from Aristotle in the Hegelian corpus concerns thought: "thought thinks itself through participation in what is thought [*αύτὸν δὲ νοεῖ ὁ νοῦς κατα μετάληψιν τοῦ νοητοῦ*]" (Aristotle *Meta.* 1072b19; Hegel *Werke* 10:395). Plotinus (*Ennead* V.1.9) criticizes Aristotle for the immanence of "self-intellection" because the reflexivity of thought cancels the transcendence of the First or the One, which "neither strives, since it feels no lack, nor attains, since it has no striving" (*Ennead* III.8.11). Plotinus recognizes that whatever Aristotle (and by extension, Hegel) means by "thought thinking itself," it does not describe some transcendental, otherworldly action that occurs in isolated splendor from the world of human history. The plan is the Aristotelian formal-final cause of spirit's becoming. It is immanent to the process, not an external imposition. As knowledge is always dialectically mediated for Hegel, any discussion of a priori knowledge such as Fichte thematizes can find no place in Hegel's philosophical system, however often his languages veers in that direction. Hegel's philosophical accounting of history combines the historical analyses of Herder with the philosophical goals of Fichte. The philosopher must know the plan of history via the facts of

history; he must combine the a priori and the a posteriori in a single, absolute knowing. In this way, Hegel constructs a speculative philosophy of world history based, as he sees it, upon the very facts and events of world history itself. This philosophy is most clearly stated in Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of world history.

Hegel presented his lectures on the philosophy of world history regularly during his tenure as chair of philosophy in Berlin (1818–31), having taken up the post after it had remained empty upon Fichte's resignation in 1811. Extant copies of the lectures or introductions, made by students or from Hegel's notes, exist from 1822, 1826–27, 1828, and 1830. The lectures were popular, and even after Hegel's death the lectures were published and have served as a widely used introduction to Hegel's thought in German-speaking countries. The first edition of the lectures was brought out in 1837 by Eduard Gans, a former pupil of Hegel's and a professor of law at Berlin; Hegel's son Karl Hegel edited another edition in 1840, which served as Sibree's text for the first English translation in 1857. The lectures have also acted as a lightning rod for criticism of the entire Hegelian system, almost from their first appearance in German intellectual life. Within Hegel's own lifetime and immediately following his death in 1831, very different ideas about the significance of Hegelian philosophy arose, particularly around the notions of history, reason, and the state. Sympathetic interpreters such as Christian Hermann Weisse (Hegel *Letters* 539–40) and Karl Windischmann (*Letters* 566) – who wrote a philosophy of history under Hegel's influence entitled *Die Philosophie im Fortgang der Weltgeschichte* – saw Hegel's system as a positive assertion about Protestant Christian activism and the ethical life of the state. On the other hand, early critics such as Feuerbach and Engels thought Hegel's putative radicalism was not radical *enough* for their tastes. Finally, Rudolf Haym as well as others portrayed Hegel as a political reactionary based on his statements about the relationship between the state, history, and individual human beings. Haym's 1857 work *Hegel und seine Zeit* contains one of the earliest and clearest portrayals of Hegel as a pro-Prussian apologist following the Congress of Vienna in 1814–15, and this work had a lasting effect on an entire generation of thinkers and political activists. The view of Hegel as a right-wing apologist in the decades after his death stem not only from the lectures on the philosophy of world history, but on an earlier and much better-known work, published in book form by Hegel as a lecture aid to his students and not hindered by incomplete manuscripts and difficult attribution, Hegel's 1820 *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*.

7.2 History, the real, and the rational

One of the most misunderstood, commented upon, and controversial statements Hegel ever made about the relationship between the state, human history, and

reason is found in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*. I refer, of course, to the gnomic proposition: "*Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig*" (Hegel *Werke* 7:24), usually translated by the couplet "what is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational." I have made passing reference to this proposition in various places in this work so far, and briefly discussed Engels's (convincing, though usually overlooked) reading of this saying in an earlier chapter. Given the importance of this small proposition in the reception history of Hegel's philosophy, as well as the importance Hegel himself placed on the *Philosophy of Right* for understanding his philosophy of history (he commends the *Philosophy of Right* to his students as a primer in the Introduction to his 1822 and 1828 versions of the philosophy of history lectures), it is important to attempt a coherent interpretation of what Hegel means by this proposition and clearly situate the importance of the sentiment for the overall theme of the philosophy of history lectures. The saying, dealing as it does with the relationship between actuality and reason, will have direct bearing upon the false claim that Hegel believes he has reached the end of history in his philosophy. Specifically, once it becomes clear that Hegel's claim about the rational and the real has nothing at all to do with either foreclosing on human freedom in history or with ending the development of actual history, it is much easier to see Hegel's philosophy of history for what it is, and for what it is not.

Engels was surely right when he wrote, "No philosophical saying has earned more gratitude from narrow-minded governments and scorn from equally narrow-minded liberals than Hegel's famous statement, 'All that is real is rational; all that is rational is real'" (Engels *MEW* 21:266). The "narrow-minded governments" on the right viewed Hegel's saying as an affirmation of the revolutionary times in which they lived (recall that the Prussian nobility's response to Hegelian thought was to send Schelling to stamp it out). On the other hand, once the Revolutions of 1848 failed to fully bring about the reforms the left had hoped for, many in the conservative government began to see Hegel's statement not as a challenge to them, but as an affirmation of their own existence. After all, if the actual (that which is) is rational (that which should be), the status quo represents reason, and is supported by speculative philosophy. It is based on this misunderstanding of Hegel's saying that Engels excoriates the "equally narrow-minded liberals" of his own day for ceding Hegelian philosophy to the right. Engels points out that neither the nobility on the right nor the revolutionary activists on the left had truly grasped Hegel's conception of the rational and the real. One must go even further in interpreting this proposition than Engels did, however. The saying appears within the context of a description of Plato's *Republic* as an "empty ideal [*leeren Ideal*]" shorn of any actual relevance to real life. As such, the proposition first of all concerns the relationship of philosophy to actuality, actual life, "in which the

principles of rights and duties are taken seriously, and which lives in light of these principles" (Hegel *Werke* 7:24). In keeping with his consistent philosophical commitment to deal only with what is, not with what will be or what must be, Hegel's saying concerns a description of real life, not a prescription of ideal life. What can this mean?

Hegel is concerned that the focus of his work on the state (and consequently on history) be firmly upon the *actual* state (and consequently on *actual* history). It is for this reason that he takes to task Plato's stated goal in *Republic* (369a–375a) to analyze the conditions for the ideal state, καλλίπολις. Against Plato's search for ideals, Hegel asserts, "because philosophy is the exploration of the rational, it is therefore the grasping of what is present and real [*das Erfassen des Gegenwärtigen und Wirklichen*], not the setting up of some otherworldly God-knows-where – though in fact one *can* know where it is, namely in the one-sided errors of an empty ratiocination" (Hegel *Werke* 7:24). On the other hand, Gadamer points out that Hegel sides with Plato against Aristotle's primacy of demonstrations (ἀποδείξεις) over division (διαίρεσις) (Aristotle *An. Pr.* 46a32–46b40; cf. Plato, *Sophist* 219a–231c), which Gadamer identifies with dialectic. "For Hegel," Gadamer writes, "not the ideal of logical cogency but that of philosophical demonstration is paramount; i.e., the immanent, continuing explication of thought. And that is something very much closer to the step by step division and definition of Plato's dialogue" (Gadamer 1976: 27). Gadamer's statements are relevant to Hegel's claims about the real and the rational, because they remind us that Hegel is not spinning out witty apothegms with his thought, but trying to grasp what is really real, as it were. Gadamer's Hegel is "a personalized, dialogical Hegel behind whom there always stood the daily, thoughtful intercourse with the Platonic dialogues" (Gadamer 1996: 44). It is not any *abstract* state or situation which has the character of reason, but only those that are actual, i.e. necessary. Necessity is a dialectical matter for Hegel, a step-by-step syllogism which includes the particular or categorical, the singular or individual, and the universal (Hegel *Werke* 8 §191). Actuality, reason, and necessity are equally indispensable for Hegel's notion of the rational and the real. Furthermore, Hegel insists that philosophy "must distance itself as far as possible from the obligation to construct a state as it must be," but rather concern itself only with what has been, and what is; "for that *which is*, is reason [*denn das* was ist*, ist die Vernunft*]." It is also within this context that Hegel makes his famous statement that "philosophy is its own time comprehended in thought" (*Werke* 7:26). Philosophy must concern itself with knowing absolutely all that has been, and all that is now, which is the work of *die Vernunft*. Such exact knowledge, painfully and carefully won through slow and systematic analysis, is enough for philosophy; questions of "ought to be" or "will be" must be left aside. And because the question of ought is not properly the subject of philosophy, it is wrong to understand Hegel's saying on the

rational and the real as an a priori statement about the way any given state or social structure should be.

Realizing the ease with which one could misconstrue his meaning, and wanting to demonstrate the integration of his political thought with his overall metaphysic, Hegel goes to great lengths in his *Enzyklopädie* to clarify the meaning of the real/rational relationship in the *Philosophy of Right*. Hegel devotes a long *Zusatz* or codicil in the *Enzyklopädie* to his "simple proposition" which has seemed "so shocking to many" (*Werke* 8 §6). There, Hegel points out that the proposition has both a religious and a philosophical meaning. Because in his eyes the religious use of the real/rational saying concerns the doctrine of divine governance of the world, it is not necessary to discuss this meaning of the proposition (Hegel *Werke* 8 §6). The religious aspect dwells on divine necessity, and as such is a matter for faith, not philosophy. The philosophical aspect of the real/rational saying, however, is equally concerned with necessity; more specifically with the intersection of what is *actual* and what is necessary. As far as the philosophical discussion is concerned, "we have to presume that one is educated enough to know … that what is, is in part *appearance* and only in part *actuality* [*das Dasein zum Teil* Erscheinung *und nur zum Teil* Wirklichkeit *ist*]. In everyday life people may sometimes call every little idea, error, evil, and suchlike 'actual,' as well as every existence, however wilted and transient it may be" (*Werke* 8 §6). But to call something "actual" is not for it to truly be actual, for "actuality" or *Wirklichkeit* is a technical term for Hegel, having to do with the thing's relative necessity. That which is necessarily so, is actual; if it is necessary, only then may it be called actual.

Hegel gives as an example in *Philosophy of Right* a hand that has been cut off: "a hand which has been cut off still looks like a hand and exists, but it lacks actuality. True actuality is necessity: what is actual is necessary in itself" (*Werke* 7 §270). Compare this to Heidegger's discussion of hands in *Was Heisst Denken?* (*GA* 8:18):

> The hand is another matter. In the ordinary sense, the hand is part of our bodily organism. But the essence of a hand can never be determined or explained by its simply being an organ that can grasp. For example, apes have grasping organs, but apes do not have hands. The hand is infinitely different from all grasping organs: paws, claws, fangs; different, that is, by an abyss of essence. Only a being who speaks – that is, thinks – can have hands, and may have a hand in handiwork [*kann die Hand haben und in der Handhabung Werke der Hand vollbringen*].

In Hegelian parlance, the hand of an ape may exist, but is not actual. That is because, in line with Hegel's Aristotelian metaphysics, an ape's hand does not fulfill the formal-final cause of handedness. Hegel's final word on the rational/real pseudo-problem follows: "A bad state is simply one that exists; a body that is sick also exists, but it has no true reality" (Hegel *Werke* 7 §270). That is, a bad state (a bad body-politic) exists, but is not actual; a sick body exists

(in a bad state), but is not actual. Neither fulfills the formal-final cause of the state of being a healthy state, as it were, and thus neither can be called rationally actual nor actually rational. The world is full of "real" things (thoughts, ideas, objects, etc.) that are not, in fact, "actual" at all. Hegel affords a high level of ontological value to necessity, and so actuality is an ontological step beyond possibility. To be merely *possible* is not to be *necessary*, and thus not to be *actual* in a Hegelian sense. Only a very narrow class of existing things (objects, feelings, states of existence, etc.) can be considered *actual* in Hegel's schema. Moreover, Hegel is opposed to severing *die Idee* from actuality; that is, Hegelian idealism does not believe somehow in the non-existence of the phenomenal world, etc. On the contrary, that which is actual is "really real" in a common-sense way of speaking, as is that which is not actual. Necessity is tied to the fulfillment of purpose, a nod to Hegel's basic Aristotelianism. If that which *is* does not fulfill its own nature (the spirit of a thing), it is not actual, though it may exist or be "real" in a common, everyday sense.

A failure to come to terms with the Hegelian sense of actuality is the source of many of the most basic errors in interpreting Hegel's historical and political philosophy. If Hegel is saying that the real is rational, in the sense that whatever does exist, exists by virtue of reason and is thus reasonable (the *is* and the *ought* coincide), one is able to muster Hegel to the defense of any and all regimes no matter how oppressive or felicitous. Such a reading of the rational and the real would be the ultimate affirmation of the status quo, and would naturally lead to Hegel being considered, say, a reactionary enemy of the open society, as Karl Popper (2003 [1945]) understood him. Rudolf Haym certainly read Hegel this way, and his work had a lasting effect on the interpretation of Hegel. According to Haym, the whole point of Hegel's philosophical project was to make himself "philosophical dictator over Germany [*ein philosophischer Dictator über Deutschland*]" and to reveal the "elective affinity and the inner unity [*der Wahlverwandtschaft und der inneren Zusammengehörigkeit*] of the Prussian state and Hegelian doctrine" (Haym 1962 [1857]: 357). And when Nietzsche castigated Hegelians of his own day, there should have been little doubt that, however accurate or otherwise his criticisms were when directed against Hegel, they were certainly deserved against Hegel's erstwhile later followers. But in fact, Hegel never envisioned the rational and the real as having anything to do with any particular state or government. He could not be more explicit on this point: "With the idea of the state as such, one must not have before one's eyes any particular states or particular institutions; one must consider the idea, this actual God, in its own right" (*Werke* 7 §258). When Hegel refers to the state as "*diesen wirklichen Gott*" he intends the idea to carry with it the notion of Hegelian-Aristotelian necessity, as God is necessary *a se*. Only in this sense is a state "actual" in a Hegelian sense: an actual state is one that

is as necessary as God. Far from aggrandizing the state as Fichte does, Hegel severely relativizes any real state as such.

Along the same lines, to grasp the relationship between necessity and actuality is also to understand Hegel's difficult statement, made earlier in the same passage, that "*es ist der Gang Gottes in der Welt, das der Staat ist*" (*Werke* 7 §258) (cf. Herder's reference to *der Gang Gottes in der Natur* for an interesting antecedent to the Hegelian formulation [Herder *SW* 13:9]; also, Hobbes [*Leviathan* II.xvii.13] calls the commonwealth constituted by the social contract "that great Leviathan, or rather … that *Mortal God* to which we owe, under the *Immortal God*, our peace and defense"). For the state to be the march of God, it must be what God is, that is, necessary *a se*. Naturally there are no historical states which can meet that criteria. So what can Hegel mean with this statement? It is possible, of course, that Hegel got caught up in his own rhetoric (Hegel is not above stretching a good metaphor to suit his purposes). But this cannot be the only answer. Nor is Hegel equating the state as such (as if there were any particular state which he had in mind) with God. Rather, any state that is necessary is "a self-sufficient power" which has as its basis "the sway of reason actualizing itself as will" (Hegel *Werke* 7 §258); that is, *Wille* with a political sense similar to Rousseau's *volonté générale*, though much more than this. Such a state will manifest itself, as Fichte saw, as an organic whole, its power flowing from its reason, and its reason flowing from its power. One sign that a state is not actual in this sense is that it has to rely upon coercive power rather than intrinsic reason which comes from and at the same time flows into its citizenry ("single individuals are only moments" of such a state). Where will and reason are not in sync, actuality is not to be found (i.e. such a will must not be a mere political will to power).

Obviously states such as the Prussian juggernaut ("the Prussian monarchy is not a country which has an army, but an army which has a country," Clark 2006: 215) or the German Reich under *Nationalsocialismus* could not qualify as *actual* states given the Hegelian criteria, although of course they *existed*. As Hegel says, "the state is not a work of art; it exists in the world, and thus in the sphere of arbitrariness, contingency, and error, and evil behavior can disfigure it in many ways" (Hegel *Werke* 7 §258). Still, even the ugliest state is still a state, and may potentially rise to the level of actuality, given exposure to the refining fire of reason. The same standard applies to individuals as well. The fulfillment of the state and the fulfillment of the individual stand to each other in reciprocal relationship. One simply cannot privilege one over the other and maintain the Hegelian relationship. Hegel himself never privileges one over the other; in fact, as Jackson (1996: 25) states, Hegel's "speculative proposition is a program of action, not the advocacy of acquiescence." Jackson has in mind Hegel's explanation of his statements about the real and the rational in

Philosophy of Right §10, namely, that that which is "in itself" is not necessarily "in actuality." Actual existence requires judgment and action; judgment about the status of any given claim to rationality, and action to make the claim show itself as true or false. As Hegel puts it, "Now what exists at first only in itself does not exist in its actuality. The person who is rational *in himself* [an sich] must … also become rational *for himself* [für sich]" (Hegel *Werke* 7 §10), that is, in actuality (*an und für sich Selbst* in Hegelese). Necessity and actuality are intimately tied together.

What, then, is a "necessary" state? In considering the extent to which a state can (or cannot) be judged actual in the sense of being necessary, Hegel writes: "The state is actual, and its actuality consists in the fact that the interest of the whole realizes itself in the particular ends. Actuality is always the unity of universality and particularity, the resolution of universality into particularity" (*Werke* 7 §270). Hegel is describing a state which is at one with the spirit of the people. When the state and the will of the people are unified, when the desires and needs of the people are brought about through the exercise of the legitimate power of the state, a state is actual, and can be termed necessary in this limited sense only, i.e. in the sense that it is a necessary manifestation of the spirit of the people. The Greek *πόλις* structured along Aristotelian lines is Hegel's model. The universality of the state and the particularity of the people come together and support one another in a healthy and vibrant union when a state is actual. Hegel's example of a sick body (*Werke* 7 §270) brings to mind the idea of natural, necessary flourishing, and this is certainly a clue to comprehending what Hegel means by a state which is actual. Whatever its particular policies or the legitimate source of its organic power, when human flourishing (understood as Aristotelian *εὐδαιμονία*) takes place in and through the exercise of the state's power and the people's natural reception of that power, the state itself can be called actual in a Hegelian sense. Such flourishing is necessary; it is the necessary outcome of the spirit of the people becoming actual in the life of the state, and vice versa. As Hegel puts it, "True actuality is necessity: what is actual is in itself necessary [and] … continually creates itself even as it dissolves [*Auflösung*]" (*Werke* 7 §270). The concept of necessity for Hegel must contain within itself the idea of creative continuation and purpose even when (as is inevitable) the whole itself is breaking up again into its constituent parts.

There is a religious aspect to the rational and the real which should be noted. Although Hegel says that when discussing *Wirklichkeit* and *Vernünftigkeit* "we need not discuss religion" (*Werke* 8 §6), this is only because God's providential care is something he assumes his readers accept. Hegel believes the harder proof to establish is the philosophical one. As Fackenheim (1996: 42) points out, all attempts at understanding Hegel's *Wirklichkeit* and *Vernünftigkeit* "should be undertaken in full awareness of two conditions which the *Encyclopedia*

passage considers evident … One is possession of … 'religion.' The other is the kind of philosophical 'culture' which includes 'knowledge' of 'God.'" To the extent that these conditions no longer obtain in general Hegel scholarship, Hegel's claims about the real and the rational are apt to be misconstrued. One of the components Hegel assumes in his saying is the acceptance of a religious worldview. General religious illiteracy is something foreign to the world of Hegel's texts, and they have suffered for it as modernity has made its way. This is not special pleading on Fackenheim's part; Hegel's philosophy must stand or fall on its own merits, and his arguments must appeal in and of themselves, or not at all. Yet Fackenheim has noted something that is almost always overlooked by Hegel scholars unable or unwilling to wrestle with the theological component of his thought: Hegel conceived of his philosophy as the next stage beyond religion, but as religion's suspension (*Aufhebung*), not its effacement (the progression art–religion–philosophy in Hegel's thought is well known). To try and argue that Hegel couched much of his thought in a religious idiom to gain it a wider audience or in some frail attempt at passing orthodoxy is utterly false – not even Marx accuses Hegel of that. The religious theme in Hegel's philosophy relates to his "commitment to dynamic, holistic thinking and, correlatively, to the premise that reality is a developing whole, an absolute. An adequately holistic and *thus* self-critical study can ill afford to dismiss the reality of any phenomenon, religion included. Indeed, in the case of religion, such a study must acknowledge its truth and even accord it a certain prerogative for *artfully* calling us back to the absolute" (Dahlstrom 2002: 8). Hegel was not paying lip-service to religion; he was trying to carry out his religious (specifically Christian) project of bringing together the mundane and the sacred, the human and the divine; this is why Lebrun (2004: 20) says that Hegel's concept of truth is "an unexpected haven for theology." Hegel's saying on the rational and the real fits squarely within this project. Fackenheim (1996: 48) sums up the religious dimension of the proposition succinctly:

> Since the rise of Christianity the rational has become actual; but whereas Christian faith has from the start grasped the religious aspect of this event (that through the indwelling of Spirit all is accomplished) it has been left to secular reality, often indifferent or even hostile to Christian faith, to grasp its secular aspect (that through human action much, if not everything, is forever yet to be accomplished). Only the existence of these two aspects makes the philosophical (instead of merely the theological) formula true. And only the existence of this truth renders possible the Hegelian philosophy – the recognition of the rationality of the actual.

For the actual to be rational is to assert that the world is real, and is knowable, that there are no hidden truths to be found in a Platonic empyrean, but rather that, as Hegel asserts in his 1831 lectures on the philosophy of religion, "There are now no longer any secrets in God [*es ist nichts Geheimes mehr an Gott*]" (Hegel *VPR* 1:92) – a classic example of Heideggerian ontotheology.

The cosmos itself waits transparently before the gaze of absolute reason, which is perfect wholeness and actuality, *das Absolute*. Rosen (1974: 36) is insightful here: "It is evident that the term *Absolute* functions for Hegel as does the term *Whole* in classical thought. There is, of course, this crucial difference: the classical rationalist does not identify the Whole with any of its parts, not even with the part that thinks the Whole. Hegel makes precisely this identification." Like Fichte, Hegel views the entirety of the actual world, but unlike him, Hegel must concern himself with the real events and occurrences within the mortal vale. Hegel's is no a priori awareness of the divine *Weltplan*. History is never incidental to the development of spirit. To the contrary: spirit comes into its own only within the contingent events of history, and as it comes, Hegel says that spirit is able to suspend these contingencies and bring forth their true meaning and true content. The rational and the real coincide as history turns from contingent possibility to necessary actuality, or not at all. Such a necessary actuality is not an external compulsion (again, recall that rational actuality has nothing to do with coercion), but rather springs from the inner logic of events. "Philosophical reflection has no other purpose than the elimination of the contingent," Hegel says. "Contingency is the same thing as external necessity, that is, necessity which originates in causes which are themselves only external circumstances" (Hegel *VPW* 29). For the actual to be rational, the inner logic of the spirit must be preserved and external necessity must be eliminated, and such necessity can take a myriad of forms.

In the political realm, contingency can appear as rebellious unrest (because the many are not in unison with the one) or as totalitarian abuse (because the one is not in unison with the many), and often these two feed upon each other in unexpected ways. For example, autocratic capitalism feeds upon and at the same time is threatened by the emptiness of the very consumerism it engenders; liberal multiculturalism encourages certain types of ethnic and cultural diversity at the expense and exclusion of others, all the while imposing a homogenized culture which contains within it antinomies so profound that the opposition of oppression within liberalism becomes itself a form of totalizing oppression. Unrest becomes the new norm, and a sort of "permanent revolution" becomes the standard by which liberal democratic capitalism forces everything into its own image: you must oppose what is (arbitrarily and ideologically) named reactionary or status quo, or be excluded, and in so doing freedom is effaced in the name of making one "free." In the moral realm, the very existence of evil argues for an ineradicable contingency in human life, for what could be more contingent than events which call forth radical protest against evil in all its forms: so-called natural evil in floods and fires, human evil in killings and bondage, non-human evil in diseases and plagues? The seeming eternality of contingency in the form of evil itself is what moves Hegel to declare his philosophy of history to be a theodicy, for if the actual is

to be rational, evil (as radical contingency) has to be explained from within the system itself. Only then can Hegel claim that contingency has truly been overcome. Note, however, that the overcoming of contingency does not eliminate the one thing that would seem to belong together with contingency, which is *contingency aligned with rational choice*, or *freedom*. For Hegel, freedom must always be set against mere arbitrariness or license, *die Willkür*. Freedom is acting according to reason, so that the object of choice is not determinative of the subject, but the subject determinative of the object, because both are determined according to reason, whereas the "commoner thinks that he is free when he is permitted to act arbitrarily" (Hegel *Werke* 7 §15). Political *Willkür* is chaos and anarchy leading to despotism; moral *Willkür* is licentiousness leading to degeneracy, both disguised as "freedom." By comparison, true Hegelian rational freedom is achievable only within the form of reason which spirit takes within determinate communities known as nations, and their transition to states. As such, the state is the place where individuals are able to find their fulfillment, for only the state can be the vehicle for the actualization of the spirit of a people. Compare Hegel's notion of political freedom with one of the main points of Aristotle's *Politics* (1253a25–29): "it is clear that the πόλις is naturally prior to each one, for if each when separate is not self-sufficient, it must be related to the whole as other parts are, and if one is unable to enter into fellowship, or is so self-sufficient that he has no need to do so, that one is no part of any πόλις, and so must be a beast or a God." According to Hegel, "The state is the actuality of concrete freedom" (Hegel *Werke* 7 §260), and as such the proper form for the study of the realization of freedom is world history: that is, the realm of the interaction, rise, and fall of states.

7.3 Reason, history, and philosophy

Turning from Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* to the lectures on the philosophy of world history requires a certain shift in order to keep one's footing. On the one hand, the *Rechtsphilosophie* is concerned with laws, politics, and the administration of states in a way that the lectures are not. Hegel seems more interested in giving the "big picture" in his lectures on the philosophy of history, though never at the expense of what detail he feels is necessary to make his argument. At the same time, Hegel envisions the lectures as not only a continuation of the *Philosophy of Right* but also as an extensive elaboration; for example, the *Philosophy of Right* concludes with a small section entitled "World History" (§§341–60), meant to round out the division on the state (§§257–340) which contains sections on constitutional law (§§260–329) and international law (§§330–40). Hegel heads this last section "Transition from State to World History" and clearly imagines his entire *Philosophy of Right* as an expanding spiral, ever turning back upon itself to pick up the themes mentioned earlier,

but casting them in a new and fuller light as spirit moves from nations to states to the history of states. As such, Hegel's discussion of law and politics in the *Philosophy of Right* culminates with the larger issue of world history; this is why Hegel recommends §§341–60 of the *Rechtsphilosophie* as a sort of primer to his students at the beginning of his lectures on the philosophy of world history (Hegel *VPW* 3). It is an interesting and seldom discussed fact that the end of one of Hegel's most widely studied works, the *Philosophy of Right*, is prolegomena to one of his least-understood works, the lectures on the philosophy of world history.

The conclusion to the *Philosophy of Right* is something of a thumbnail sketch of the entirety of the lectures on the philosophy of history. Section 341 begins with Hegel's well-known tripartite division of spirit as art–religion–philosophy, and situates world history within philosophy as a statement about concrete and external spirit. He then goes on to speak of the spirit coming to know itself within history (§343), and the ability of speculative philosophy to understand the temporal plan of divine providence. Following this is a series of sections outlining the movement from nations to states (§§344–51), ending with a brief exposition of the "four principles behind the configurations" which spirit takes as it comes to know itself (§353–54). These four principles come into their own in the four "world-historical realms" which are the proper subject matter of the bulk of the lectures on the philosophy of history, and which establish Hegel's geographical analysis of the movement of spirit from east to west: the "Oriental" world (*Werke* 7 §355; cf. *Werke* 12:142–274); the "Greek" world (*Werke* 7 §356; cf. *Werke* 12:275–338); the "Roman" world (*Werke* 7 §357; cf. *Werke* 12:339–412); and the "Germanic" world (*Werke* 7 §358; cf. *Werke* 12:413–540), by which Hegel means Protestant Christian Europe. What are individual (albeit crucial) sections of the *Rechtsphilosophie* become the very heart of Hegel's historical analysis in his lectures on the philosophy of world history.

It will be immediately apparent that Hegel's east to west geographical formula is virtually identical to the one Fichte employed in his *Characteristics of the Present Age*, as well as being strikingly similar to Voltaire's trajectory of "progress" in human history. This is neither coincidental nor particularly surprising. Such a movement of history was a popular conception among intellectuals at the time, mapping out a movement from the ancient world in the Far East and Fertile Crescent to the apex of European civilization in the West. The geographical metaphor is a particularly important one for Hegel. As "spirit" in a Hegelian sense includes and is exemplified within the "spirit of a people" (following the common that phrase), Hegel's geographical analysis of spirit is intended to show his understanding of the "eastern" youthful dawn and the "western" maturity of humanity within the specific cultures of the world. He will refer to this east–west framework throughout the philosophy of history,

and it will be the context for the only instance of Hegel's use of the phrase "end of history" in his lectures on the philosophy of world history ("World history travels from east to west, for Europe is essentially the end of world history [*Europa ist schlechthin das Ende der Weltgeschichte*], Asia the beginning," *Werke* 12:134). Although too much can be made of the nuances of translation, it is important to translate *schlechthin* in this quotation as the adverb that it is in German. Particularly since *das Absolute* is a technical term for Hegel which carries immense import as well as a commonplace German word, casual use of the word is likely to cloud Hegel's meaning. That is to say, translating "*Europa ist schlechthin das Ende der Weltgeschichte*" as "Europe is the absolute end of history" is not only *technically* incorrect (though of course grammatically possible), it is also *philosophically* misleading. It would be useless to argue that Hegel could have said *absolute* rather than *schlechthin* here; what he could or could not have said is endlessly debatable. However, what Hegel *did* say was *schlechthin*, which carries with it a sense of equivalence such as "essentially" or "per se" or "quintessential" or even "quite simply," like *geradezu*.

Given the ubiquity of the east–west metaphor of spirit, it is not too much to say that "Hegel is in the grip … of a crude kind of pictorial thinking which constrains his expression" in his lectures on the philosophy of history (McCarney 2000: 174). Again and again, Hegel returns to the concrete idea that history has moved from east to west, because "*die Sonne, das Licht geht im Morgenlande auf*" (Hegel *Werke* 12:133). Because the sun rises in the east, and the Orient is the east and the dawn of human spirit, Europe must be the evening of human spirit, for does the sun not sink into the west? Even taking this geographical metaphor at face value, of course, it should logically follow that Europe is not the apex, but the old age of spirit, where, having limped its impotent path across more virile lands, it falls to rest below the horizon of human memory (Hegel recognizes this problem with the geographical metaphor, but glosses over it; cf. Hegel *Werke* 12:140). If the Orient is the dawning, and Europe is the setting, the Middle East should be the noontime; however, those civilizations play only a mediate role for Hegel's philosophy of history. Only once will he break this "sunrise–sunset" pattern (his discussion of Russia in the east and the Americas in the west), with telling results for his putative "end of history" thesis. Hegel's geographical metaphor structures the entirety of his philosophy of history, and grounds whatever claims can be made that he explicitly envisioned his work as the end of history. In Part I, I investigated the sources for the claims that Hegel embraced the end of history in his thought, and was able to demonstrate that the sources were at fault or too limited in their interpretation. Hegel's own "source" for the idea, as it were, is the geographical metaphor which he relies upon to make his argument, and this has still to be investigated. To appreciate it, one must study the grounding of the philosophy of history, namely, what Hegel thinks history is, how it is the realm in which

spirit becomes itself, and what he might have meant by speaking of *schlechthin das Ende der Weltgeschichte*.

In his first draft of the lectures on the philosophy of world history, Hegel outlines what he calls the three "modes of historical writing": original, reflective, and philosophical history (*Werke* 12:11). For Hegel, *original* history is Herodotus, Thucydides, and their like, history witnessed and lived by the ones who wrote it. This is the history of the "unity of author and events" (Hegel *VPW* 6), the sort of history Schopenhauer recommended as the only true and useful sort (Schopenhauer *SW* 1:342–43; 2:563–64). Here, the events and the chroniclers are one; history is lived by the ones who record it, and is an immediate manifestation of their own subjective *Lebenswelt*. What this sort of history lacks for Hegel is an analytical component, which is achieved in the second mode of historical writing, what he calls *reflective* history. This is historical writing per se, the sort of history that intends to record not only events but to pass judgment upon those events in an interpretive fashion. This mode he divides into compilation (a record of events), pragmatic (an attempt to give a full impression of history, beyond simply the facts), critical (which evaluates historical narratives for credibility), and specialized history (history of art, of law, etc.). All of these sorts are reflective history in that they analyze and interpret the events of history from the point of view of someone who has not been a participant in the events themselves. Reflective history is characterized by an attempt at objectivity. The third sort of history is *philosophical* history (Hegel *Werke* 12:19), which Hegel describes as akin to specialized history, save that instead of focusing upon one aspect of history, it takes the concrete spirit of history, *die Idee* itself, as its subject matter, and thus is able to explicate not only a slice of history, but its entirety. In a dialectical fashion, philosophical history penetrates the inner core of an epoch (the subjectivity of original history) and then explicates it in terms of itself (the objectivity of reflective history) and in light of its fuller meaning in the movement of spirit (the subject–object identity of absolute spirit explicated in historical-philosophical terms).

Hegel devotes the second draft of the lectures on the philosophy of world history (delivered in 1830) to a fuller discussion of the third sort of history, namely philosophical history – its general concept, the realization of spirit in history, and the general course of history based upon the geographical development and manifestation of spirit in the world:

> The first line of attack made against philosophy is that it goes into the study of history with preconceived notions, and that it considers history from the point of view of these notions. But the only notion which philosophy brings with it is the simple idea of *reason*, that reason governs the world, and that world history is therefore a rational process.

Man in erster Linie der Philosophie den Vorwurf macht, daß sie mit Gedanken an die Geschichte gehe und diese nach Gedanken betrachte. Der einzige Gedanke, den die Philosophie mitbringt, ist aber die einfache Gedanke der Vernunft*, daß die Vernunft die Welt beherrsche, daß es also auch in der Weltgeschichte vernüftig zugegangen sei.*
(Hegel *VPW* 28)

This is Hegel's foundational statement on the philosophy of history. He is attempting to jettison a position which he believes has marred all previous approaches to the philosophy of history, namely, the establishing of presuppositions without recourse to actual history. He begins by defending the philosophical pursuit of reason in history as spirit as a valid undertaking. Hegel says that historians might consider his statement about reason and history to be a presupposition itself, but from within philosophy itself, reason is not a presupposition. Rather, spirit as reason is infinite power, infinite form, infinite material, and infinite content, "the essence and truth of all, and is itself the material on which it operates through its own activity" (*VPW* 28). Hegel's assumption of reasonableness in history is another manifestation of his Aristotelian openness to the world. Because truth can be found within the world, both Aristotle and Hegel have a confidence about intellectual endeavors having to do with the world of reality that Plato and his world of shadows could never achieve. On the other hand, Hegel shares with both Plato and Aristotle a basic teleological notion of the world, and he values Platonic metaphors of enlightenment such as the myth of the cave (Plato, *Republic* 514aff.) and the simile of the sun (507dff.). Hegel rejects out of hand, however, any notion that absolute truth is unattainable in this world, or only partially attainable. The only choice is reason or unreason; to deny this is to admit irrationality into the study of the world, which would then be to abdicate the responsibility of philosophers to make sense of the world and to pursue wisdom. Therefore, the philosophical pursuit of reason in history must undertake the elimination of the contingent (Hegel *VPW* 29), for necessary reason can have nothing to do with irrational necessity. Only that which is internally consistent and autonomous can count as philosophy (a very Kantian theme in Hegel), and the philosophy of history therefore has to do with the apprehension of absolute reason in history (a very un-Kantian theme in Hegel).

Hegel insists that without an assumption of reasonableness or purpose, there can be no hope of grasping the sweep of history and the place of reason within history. On the other hand, once reason is assumed, both the larger meanings and the individual events of history find their own places:

That there is within the events of nations a governing and final end [*ein letzter Zweck*], which is reason in world history – not the rationality of a particular subject, but a divine, absolute reason [*die göttliche, absolute Vernunft*] – is a truth we assume; its proof is the formal study of world history itself, the image and action of reason. In fact, the actual proof lies in an understanding of reason itself, which is merely revealed within

> world history. World history is only the coming to presence of this one reason [*die Erscheinung dieser einen Vernunft*], only one of the particular forms in which reason reveals itself; a type of the prototype which is depicted in one particular element, in the life of nations.
>
> (Hegel *VPW* 29–30)

By establishing a method of dealing with history that works from both rational (a priori philosophical) and empirical (a posteriori historical) ends, Hegel situates his philosophy of history squarely between the philosophical emphasis of Fichte and the historical emphasis of Herder, drawing on what is best in both of them for the achievement of a speculative philosophy of history. Like Fichte, Hegel places his faith in a design which is a rational process, knowable by reason and available to philosophy. On the other hand, unlike Fichte Hegel is uninterested in a priori reason for its own sake. The proof of an assertion of reason in history does not come from any a priori principles, but, as Hegel says, from the study of actual history, which is the image of reason itself. Hegel is closer to Herder, who constantly urged that the philosophical study of history hew as closely as possible to the facts of history as encountered in individual nations. Moreover, Hegel's insistence on the importance of actual historical events is a nod to his Aristotelian commitment to universals existing *in res* rather than in ideal and inaccessible Platonic forms. He takes specific aim at Fichtean-type philosophies of history which attempt a priori accounts of history, including statements about the future course of history. Hegel says "we must be sure to take history as it is; in other words, we must proceed historically and empirically" and avoid introducing "a priori fictions into history" (*VPW* 31). Hegel even goes so far as to single out "a widely accepted fiction" about a primal people which is impossible not to recognize as Fichte's belief in *Normalvolk*, so closely does it match Fichte's doctrine (*VPW* 31). One cannot explain history front-to-back, as it were; only the perspective of the philosopher who stands and looks backwards can be faithful to the truth (recall Hegel's famous owl of Minerva). Hegel insists that the first condition of his philosophical investigations is that "history has to be apprehended accurately," according to reason, for "whoever looks at the world rationally will find that it assumes a rational appearance; the two exist in a reciprocal relationship" (*VPW* 31).

It is legitimate to ask if Hegel does not import *die Idee* into history as an assumed hermeneutical framework. After all, Hegel does speak about it as a presupposition. However, insofar as for Hegel *die Idee* is truth, reason, made concrete to itself ("*Die Idee* is truth in itself and for itself," Hegel *Werke* 8 §213), it is possible to understand Hegel's assumption about *die Idee* in history simply as another manifestation of his Aristotelian faith in reason's epistemological access to the world as such. Truth is out there; that is, truth *is*, it exists, and is *out there*, available to us within the world of phenomenal reality, and can be

seen in history. One need not affirm this (either because one is a skeptic, or one believes that the created order is marred by sin, or because the phenomenal world is only a copy of the true world, or for any number of reasons), but any other assumption about history will be just as much an assumption; proving that truth is *not* available in the world would be proving a negative. There is therefore no prima facie reason to disallow Hegel's assumption of reason in history. (There are a posteriori reasons to doubt the reasonableness of world history, of course; the theodic problem, for example, is the classic example of a good reason to deny the complete rationality of the world and its history. Hegel knows this; it is one of the reasons he positions his philosophy of history as a theodicy.) Hegel admits that he is asking for an assumption on the front end of his investigation, but it is not an a priori proof such as Fichte offers, and as such Hegel does not believe that it falls under philosophical censure; a hermeneutical framework is not an a priori proof. He writes, "Admittedly, philosophy does follow an a priori method insofar as it supposes *die Idee*. But *die Idee* is undoubtedly there, and reason is fully convinced of its presence" (Hegel *VPW* 32). Hegel therefore spends no more time justifying his claim that *die Idee* (i.e. truth become objective) must be found within history.

Nevertheless Hegel does mention two instances of the claim that reason governs history which are separate from his philosophy, both of which he musters to his defense. The first is the statement of Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (*c.* 500 BC–428 BC) concerning *νοῦς*, which Hegel translates as "understanding in general, or reason" (*VPW* 37). The Anaxagoras fragment reads (DK 59 B 12):

> All other things partake in a portion of everything, but *νοῦς* is unbounded and self-ruled, and is mixed with nothing, but is alone, itself by itself.
> *τὰ μὲν ἄλλα παντὸς μοῖραν μετέχει νοῦς δέ ἐστιν ἄπειρον καὶ αὐτοκρατὲς καὶ μέμεικται οὐδενὶ χρήματι ἀλλὰ μόνος αὐτος ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ ἐστιν.*

Hegel cites the Anaxagoras saying with approval, though he is quick to point out that neither he nor Anaxagoras intends to posit *νοῦς* as some animating spirit apart from the world itself. *Noûς* is not "an intelligence in the sense of self-conscious reason, not a spirit as such; we must be very careful to distinguish the two from each other. The motion of the solar system is the result of invariable laws; these laws are reason itself" (Hegel *VPW* 37). What Hegel finds problematic with the formulation of reason as *νοῦς* is that the concept is far too abstract, and therefore insufficient to its concept, namely *die Idee* or truth. The second instance Hegel cites ("the truth of which we are personally convinced") is the traditional notion of divine providence (*die Vorsehung*), or the sovereignty and superintendence of God over events in people's lives and throughout history. Hegel mentions providential care not to simply assert it, but to point out that such a truth "is consistent with the principle in question," i.e. that belief in providence is relevant to the question of reason in history. "For

divine providence is wisdom coupled with infinite power, which actualizes its ends, i.e. the absolute and rational final purpose of the world [*den absoluten, vernünftigen Endzweck der Welt*]; reason is completely free self-determining thought, *Nous*" (*VPW* 39). Divine providence has the same problem as *voûς*, however – it is too abstract. What is determinate, or practical and concrete, is not the claim that divine providence or *voûς* is active in the world, but the activity itself. This activity of *voûς* in the world is what Hegel calls the providential plan (*der Plan der Vorsehung*), and it functions for Hegel the same way that Fichte's *Weltplan* functions for him, with a crucial difference: Fichte's *Weltplan* is known a priori, whereas Hegel's *Plan der Vorsehung* can only be known *through* the activity of history. It is therefore the job of philosophy to study the actual events of history in order to perceive the plan of providence, secure in the knowledge that the plan is knowable.

At this point in his lectures on the philosophy of history, Hegel launches into an extended discussion on religious epistemology. Hegel's claims about human knowledge of the divine are important for conceiving his philosophy of history as a theodicy, and so warrant attention. Hegel begins, "Now the determinate aspects of providence, the actions providence somehow or another carries out, is called the plan of providence (i.e. the end and means of its destiny and aims). But this plan is one which is hidden from our eyes, and we are told that to want to discern it is presumption" (*VPW* 39). Both piety and philosophy traditionally forbid such comprehension. The Bible contains injunctions such as "My thoughts are not your thoughts and my ways are not your ways. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my thoughts above your thoughts and my ways above your ways" (Isa. 55:8–9), and Christian theologians from Anselm (*Proslogion* §1) to Aquinas (*Summa contra gentiles* I.3) and Calvin (*Institutes* I.4) to Barth (*Dogmatics* II.1) have agreed that faith is trans-rational or above reason, requiring revelation at some point to complete that which reason can know. In addition, Kant's great first *Critique* was in part aimed at the theological speculations of reason. His well-known statement to that effect is, "I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith. The dogmatism of metaphysics that is the preconception that it is possible to make headway in metaphysics without a previous criticism of pure reason, is the source of all that unbelief, always very dogmatic, which wars against morality" (Kant *GS* 3:Bxxx). Kant's philosophy was so devastating to school metaphysics that many of his readers assumed he had removed speculation about God so far from human possibility that he had in effect announced a new atheism, and his assertion that God must be a postulate of pure reason in the second *Critique* (*GS* 5:122ff.) did little to tamp down pious outrage.

While Hegel is conscious of this tradition, his first concern is not with piety, but with philosophy. Hegel admits that most believers are willing to allow isolated instances of providential awareness, when the acts of God in history

become clear and humans are able to affirm that this or that individual event is a manifestation of the plan of divine providence. But they are completely unwilling to follow this insight to its logical conclusion and admit that the entire plan should be knowable. In the philosophy of history, however, there can be no room for pious humility or epistemological limitations, by virtue of the very subject matter: "In world history, however, we are concerned with individuals, which are peoples, totalities, states; we cannot remain rooted in a sort of trivial faith in divine providence," Hegel insists. "Concrete events are the means it uses, the ways of divine providence and its appearances within history, which lie open before us; and we have only to relate them to the general principle" of reason in history in order to understand them (Hegel *VPW* 40). It would be beyond absurd to pretend that anyone could ascertain the ways of divinity in isolated instances, while at the same time refusing to admit the possibility that the same ways could be comprehended in the concrete facts of history which are open and available to all. Comprehension is comprehension; because the matter at hand is history, faith in divine providence should be applied on a large scale. Hegel believes that neither piety not philosophy should stand in the way of the exercise of human reason; philosophy itself is the knowledge of the ways of reason, and unless one is willing to admit that reason has no place in history, philosophy cannot be barred from investigating how reason actualizes itself within history. And as for piety, Hegel has a ready answer in the form of scripture. He inveighs against "the doctrine, which has now become a prejudice, that it is impossible to know God, in opposition to what holy scripture demands as our highest duty, not only to love God but also to know him" (*VPW* 40; cf. Matt. 22:37). Hegel then paraphrases 1 Corinthians 2:10, "For to us God revealed them through the spirit; for the spirit searches all things, even the depths of God."

The important aspect of this discussion so far has been Hegel's assurance that history follows the plan of reason, which Hegel says the Greeks understood as *νοῦς* and revealed religion calls divine providence. As abstract *νοῦς* and as pious faith, these concepts are inadequate to the true task which philosophy faces when it considers the sweep of human history; to comprehend the workings of reason and to know that history follows a rational plan. Because history displays a plan, freedom is possible for humanity in knowing the plan and understanding its place within it. Hegel says that "if I am dependent [*abhängig*], I am related to some other which I am not, I cannot exist without some other; I am free if I am sufficient for my own existence" (Hegel *Werke* 12:30). That is, in the state of freedom, actuality and rationality coincide; external necessity (contingency) is overcome by internal necessity (freedom), and the self is at home with itself, rests within itself, and knows itself as itself. Reason is complete, contingency is overcome, and the self is free to achieve its *Endzweck* within the plan, for the self itself *is* a manifestation of the plan ("thought [*νοῦς*] and

the object of thought [*νοητόν*] are the same thing, because thought is receptive of the object of thought and the essence [*ὀυσίας*]," Aristotle *Meta.* 1072b22). Reason in history for Hegel means that the plan writ large upon the events of history and the plan as understood by individuals will come together in a mutual freedom realized via the dialectic. "In all drives I begin with an other, such that for me it is something external. Here we may speak of dependence." However, that is not the entire story, for "Freedom is only present where there is no other for me that is not myself" (Hegel *Werke* 8 §24). Because for Hegel freedom means autonomy and self-direction, freedom also has to do with purpose, ends, and goals; rational freedom is teleological ("reason is *purposeful action* [*zweckmäßige Tun*]," *Werke* 3:26). Those goals are actualized within history and will be achieved by human beings acting freely and in accordance with the plan of divine providence. Neither Herder nor Fichte understands history or the *Weltplan* in this way. The movement of this plan through history gives rise to Hegel's geographical account of spirit across the ages, which takes up the bulk of the lectures on the philosophy of history and is the larger context for Hegel's statements about the end, the future, and the goals of history.

8 The spirit and the end

> Hegel's definition of history as the development of "spirit" is not untrue. Neither is it partly true and partly untrue. It is as true as metaphysics, which through Hegel first brings to language its essence in the system.
>
> Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," 1949

8.1 The geography of spirit

Geist or spirit is Hegel's central concept which ties together his entire intellectual endeavor. Because spirit is an event of self-becoming for the world, for individual human beings, and for the divine, Hegel has no one specific definition of *Geist* that will serve in every instance; spirit comes to be what it is through the process of human history and "bloweth where it listeth" (John 3:8). Nevertheless, Hegel has a precise idea in mind each time he speaks of spirit. In his lectures on the philosophy of history, Hegel calls spirit "self-conscious reason" (Hegel *Werke* 12:23), and in his Jena lectures he says that *Geist* is "the 'nature' of individuals, their immediate substance, and its movement and necessity; spirit is as much the personal consciousness in their existence as it is their pure consciousness, their life, their actuality" (Hegel *GW* 8:240). Hegel's conception of the presence of spirit in history is, in fact, an assertion that "the spirit and the course of its development are the true substance of history" (Hegel *VPW* 50). Reason becomes self-conscious in the course of the development of nations into states, and the roles states play on the world stage in the attainment of freedom. In this case, no mystical notion of spirit should be entertained. Neither should one have an idea of the spirit infusing history as a "soul" as thought by religionists to inhabit a body, nor in the sense of Isolde's rapturous desire to drown "*in des Weltatems wehendem All*" (Wagner 1973 [1911]: III.iii). Rather, "The province of the spirit is created by man himself," Hegel says, "and whatever ideas we may form of the kingdom of God, it must always remain a spiritual kingdom which is realized in man and which man is expected to translate into actuality" (Hegel *VPW* 50). Spirit has a "geography";

humanity is the parchment upon which the map of spirit is drawn, and the *terra incognita* from which it is won.

Hegel scholars have understood Hegel's notion of spirit in various ways. According to John Findlay, spirit, as self-conscious freedom, is pure thinking upon thinking (akin to Aristotle's "thought thinking itself" in *Meta*. 1072b20; Hegel *Werke* 10:395), that aspect of consciousness which draws together experiences and makes sense of them in terms of a larger whole. Spirit is self-consciousness conscious of itself, that is, it is "what I refer to by the pronoun 'I,' what I am aware of when I 'enter most intimately into myself,' when I am not merely absorbed in my commerce with definite objects, but am also aware of myself as active in dealing with them" (Findlay 1958: 39). Hegel's statements about spirit resonate with Findlay's interpretation of spirit as human self-reflexive thought. For instance, Hegel says that "man as spirit *doubles* himself [*verdoppelt* sich], firstly, in that as things in nature are, he *is*, but also he is just as much *for himself*; he sees himself, he represents himself to himself, he thinks and, only by means of this active placing himself before himself, is he spirit" (Hegel *Werke* 13:51). The self-conscious movement of spirit is both Fichte's self-positing *Ich* as well as the other that recognizes and thus validates the *Ich*; Hegelian spirit expresses both without succumbing to transcendental solipsism.

> This concept [of *Geist*] is that of a common rational life, whose typical activity is the ordering of diverse items or materials under the dominance of simplifying universals, and whose Ego, whose self, if the word be appropriate at all, lies in rational categories and rational goals and common rational norms and procedure, and which is not a life peculiar to this individual conscious person or that one, but a life in which all conscious individual persons may share, to the extent that they employ the common categories, norms and standards in which that rational life consists. Spirit, *Geist*, is no particular person's spirit, but neither is it some magisterial spirit beyond particular conscious spirits: it is the common rationality, the impersonal thoughtfulness, the deeply penetrating imagination, that particular conscious beings can in different degrees come to share. (Findlay 1966: 218–19)

In addition to Findlay's *metaphysical* idea of spirit, the *social* construction of spirit advocated by Terry Pinkard (1996), Merold Westphal (1998), and others based on a reading of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and Alan Olson's *pneumatological* conception (Olson 1992; Olson was a student of Findlay's), based on the influence of Hegel's Lutheranism on his overall program, add to the complete picture of just what Hegel means by spirit, and how it might be realized in history. These two further perspectives on Hegelian spirit necessarily work off of each other to bring out nuances and emphases in Hegel's idea which each individually might miss. All three together are required if one is to traverse the geography of spirit.

Pinkard understands *Geist* as a social movement of human self-reflection. "What Hegel calls *absolute spirit*" is "a given community's reflection on its essential self-identity and its highest interests through the historical practices and institutions as art, religion, and philosophy" (Pinkard 1996: 221). Hegelian spirit is not some disembodied other, but something akin to the "spirit of the age" or a social movement and worldview that infuses the entirety of a people when they are engaged in reflecting upon what ultimately concerns them. There are fascinating affinities with Hegel's concept of spirit and Durkheim's (1915: 222–23) sociological studies of collective conscience in religion, as well as the phenomenon known as "hive mind," wherein multiple actors, working in isolation but within the same system and concentrating intensely on the same project independently and spontaneously arrive at the same conclusion or produce the same results. Pinkard also understands the social aspect of spirit to mean something like "minded" (preserving one meaning of *geistig* in German), as in "we are each 'minded' only to the extent that others are so 'like-minded'" (Pinkard 2000: 217). An example of this might be the reference of the title of the famous American painting by Archibald MacNeal Willard, the *Spirit of '76*, which spirit gave birth to the revolutionary generation of Washington, Adams, and Jefferson, and which was itself birthed through the efforts of these and other agents of history. Or perhaps the French *esprit de corps* which demonstrates the determination, enthusiasm, and shared pride and purpose of a group.

In such a social context, "the self turns out not to be a settled and fixed thing amidst the world of contingent actions but is itself a project, something that the agent develops as part of his sociality, that is, within the context of 'spirit'" (Pinkard 1996: 181). Pinkard's helpful vision of spirit forbids an identification of spirit with a non-human force which drives human history to its own ends (this is exactly what Hegel condemned as the abstractness of Greek *νοῦς* and conventional providential piety). Spirit in this sense, especially what Hegel calls absolute spirit, is social life transparently aware of itself and mindful of its role in history. Social spirit is the coming to presence of the being of a people. Therefore, where there *is* no people, but only a conglomeration of contractual interests, there can be no living spirit (hence the malaise of modernity can be explained, in part, by its artificial "social" relations). "Reason is spirit when its assurance of being all of reality has been raised to truth, and it is conscious of being its own world, and that the world is itself," according to Hegel. Spirit is the limit of one's world, because one's world, one's being in the world, is one's consciousness of spirit. "Being that is *in and for itself*, which at the same time is actual as consciousness and present to itself, is *Spirit*" (Hegel *Werke* 3:324–25). Similarly, and harking back to some of Hegel's earliest writings, Beiser says that spirit in its social sense is the concept of *love*. But "the mature Hegel sees spirit as more than the experience

of love between two finite individuals. Spirit is when finite selves become conscious of themselves as infinite; and when the infinite becomes self-conscious through finite selves" (Beiser 2005: 116; cf. Hegel *Werke* 1:394). The relational and social transcendence of the erotic models the way that spirit is understood as a social function of what it means to be human, and is the means of both transcendence and self-transcendence within and as a part of history. Beiser's reading is especially useful if one recalls the various senses of "love" that can be found in Greek. In addition to the ἔρως of desire, one also finds the φιλία of friendship and the ἀγάπη of self-giving divine love. All three are sources of self-transcendence as well as self-affirmation, and as such express the movement of Hegelian spirit.

Spirit is more than sociality and love, however. As Alan Olson argues, "Hegel's conception of Spirit, as is the case with Aristotle's conception of Being, quite literally has to do with everything and with nothing. As such it is the most basic and also the emptiest of categories" (Olson 1992: 3). According to Olson, the key lies in comprehending not only the social and erotic aspects of spirit, but also the theological or the pneumatological aspects. Olson's study of Hegel and the spirit is vital because it situates Hegel's understanding of spirit within Hegel's Lutheran faith – "not the Luther so long debated by historians and theologians, but the household or catechetical Luther familiar to every thoughtful student of his *Small Catechism*" (5). In Luther's *Small Catechism* (1529), in the article dealing with the components of the Lord's Prayer ("Thy Kingdom come"), we read "The kingdom of God comes when our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and live godly lives here in time and hereafter in eternity." Luther describes spirit not only in its philic/social aspect (the grace whereby believers live lives dedicated to God) and its agapic/erotic aspect (the love that draws the Holy Spirit and believers and incorporates them into the mystical body of Christ), but in its theological aspect, as the third Person of the Trinity who proceeds from the Father and the Son and is the gift of the Father, sent to support humankind as the Holy Spirit and Comforter (ὁ παράκλητος) (John 14:16). Luther teaches that without the work of the Holy Spirit, human wisdom and endeavors are cursed and come to nothing (Luther 1983 III:119). Without the mediating work of the Holy Spirit the spirit of man and the spirit of God cannot come together and there is no salvation, no transcendence, no unity. Christ's teaching on the coming of the Holy Spirit in John 14–15 is both a comfort and a warning, according to Luther. A comfort, because "Who would not be fearless and cheerful in view of this? And Christ calls him 'The Spirit of truth;' that is, where he is and comes there is a rock foundation through and through, the real truth. Neither falsehood nor hypocrisy is there, for the Spirit is not hypocritical" (Luther 1983 III:248–49). But also a warning: "Now that Christ had comforted and strengthened his disciples, he warns them of their future sufferings,

in order that they might be able to bear them valiantly. He is an especially good friend who warns one; and the evil visitation is much easier borne when one is prepared beforehand for it" (1983 III:251). The spirit brings truth, for the spirit is truth and leads humanity into truth (John 16:13).

Hegel's pneumatology is a philosophical appropriation and suspension of Luther's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and so an appreciation of Luther's spirit theology is required in order to comprehend Hegel's language of absolute spirit. Hegel is the pre-eminent philosopher of mediation, working out via the dialectic the ways that "'God consciousness,' which for Hegel was identical with the consciousness of the Spirit" (Olson 1992: 8), becomes known through thought which is adequate to its concept, i.e. philosophy. Philosophy is the mode of thought that moves thinking from understanding (*Verstand*) to true reason (*Vernunft*). The content of religion is true, but only philosophy can give this theological content a truly conceptual (*begrifflich*) form, as Hegel sees it. Aesthetic spirit in art is suspended within spirit as religious awareness, and then both are suspended within the highest conceptual truth which is adequate to the concept in a way that neither aesthetic nor religious spirit can be: philosophical spirit, absolute spirit, spirit that knows itself as itself and is adequate to the concept (*der Begriff*). As Olson (1992: 8) points out, "Absolute Spirit must be comprehended … in ways that are *true to its concept*, which means that Objective Spirit, understood ecclesiologically, must give way to … an adequate philosophy of the state or whatever shape the 'spiritual community' might assume in the future." Hegel's philosophical pneumatology is no flight of theological fancy, but is tied to its actual forms within the life of nations and peoples and states. The pneumatological grounding for Hegel's spirit doctrine means that, no matter what political forms it takes, *Geist* is always informed by the divine consciousness within which it originates (God in and of Godself, Hegel *VPR* 3:199–200), and from which it proceeds (the reconciliation of God and man in Christ, *VPR* 3:233–34; Hegel's own philosophical *filioque* clause).[1] Consequently, any account of Hegelian *Geist* which ignores or minimizes its explicitly theological element and focuses solely on its philosophical/epistemological or social/ethical elements is unable to do it justice.

Spirit, then, is a complex Hegelian notion which covers all important aspects of human historical life, which taken together form Hegel's notion of the whole of existence (it is in this sense analogous to Aristotle's τὸ ὄν, as Olson points out). Hegelian *Geist* is a comprehensive *philosophical* category, expressing (i) "the form of self-relation" or subjective spirit; (ii) "the form of reality" or

[1] "That this is the truth we can see in the eternal, divine idea: God is the one who as the living spirit distinguishes itself from itself, relates to an other [*ein Anderes zu setzen*] and in this other remains identical with itself, has in this other its identity with itself. This is truth" (Hegel *VPR* 3:234).

objective spirit; and (iii) "the unity of spirit as objectivity and of spirit as ideality and concept, which essentially and actually is and for ever produces itself, spirit in its absolute truth," or absolute spirit (Hegel *Werke* 10 §385). It is also a *social* category, circumscribing the identity of a group by naming what it values and enshrining these values, traditions, and morals in institutions and practices which are able to bear the weight of existential meaning. The sociality of spirit is particularly evident in the cultural and political values of a people as they transition to statehood. As a social category, *Geist* is limited to the sphere of *Vorstellungsdenken* or representational thinking, and needs the application of philosophy to give it absolute content. Finally, Hegelian *Geist* is a *religious* or *theological* category. Hegelian *Geist* encompasses in philosophical or adequately conceptual form the Holy Spirit which the Church confesses and which is active in all areas of life, and as such spirit is most ably expressed in pneumatological language. Spirit "as the absolute, eternal idea" is the Holy Spirit; "spirit present in its community," which "itself is the existing spirit, the spirit in its existence, God existing as a community" (Hegel *VPR* 3:199, 254). This aspect of spirit is also representational and determinate, and needs philosophy to make it absolute. For Hegel, only philosophy shows forth the absolute form of spirit, but because "spirit is the process of self-differentiating, the positing of distinctions" (*VPR* 3:234), the social and religious aspects of spirit do not leave it divided and alienated from itself. All three are required.

Even at his most theological, Hegel is always talking about humanity; this cannot be said often enough. For Hegel, "the Absolute Idea is God, but as dwelling or *incarnated* within each human, whose personality is defined in either religious or philosophical terms by the presence within him of divine Spirit. Hegel conceives of the incarnation not as peculiar to Christ but as a feature of human existence" (Rosen 1974: 256). Rosen's insight here is well taken, because it is all too easy to get caught up in Hegel's theological language and forget that Hegel is doing Hegelian philosophy and not Christian theology. Forgetting this leads to either dismissing it out of hand as philosophically extraneous, or (what is even worse) confusing Hegelian philosophy with an orthodox account of Christian faith. Neither option is correct. The former can be represented by Bertrand Russell (1986: 42–43):

> God has a good deal of truth since He comes rather late in the dialectic; but He has not complete truth, since He is swallowed up in the Absolute Idea … A German Hegelian, if he was taking orders, remembered how much truer the concept of God is than, e.g., that of gods; if he was becoming a civil servant, he remembered the even greater truth of the Absolute Idea, whose earthly copy was the Prussian State.

The vacuity of this interpretation needs no comment. On the other hand, Westphal (2004) has written the definitive contemporary account of how Hegelian "theology" does not provide for true self-transcendence, mustering

Lévinas and Kierkegaard to a critique of Hegelian ontotheology, all the while treating Hegel's religious philosophy with the respect and attention that it deserves. Westphal's work is a model for Hegel interpretation to follow, for it preserves Hegel's own theological usage and takes it seriously, but also applies a keen theological eye to Hegel's uses and abuses of Christian theology.

Hegel's concept of spirit is intended by him to be large enough to take in all the multifarious aspects of human history and give them content which is both explanatory and affirming. Without a clear grasp of what Hegel means by spirit, his philosophy of world history is incomprehensible, and collapses into whatever triumphalism or inanity presents itself. Because it embraces the philosophical, religious, and social aspects of life, Hegel's category of spirit should be able to deal with a fuller picture of human life and history than the category of reason as progress which Voltaire, d'Alembert, and Diderot advocate in their writings. Striking a mordant tone, Hegel says that the "content of [their] philosophy certainly does not satisfy the requirements of profundity" (*Werke* 20:298). Also, Herder's historicism is far more complete than Hegel's, at least *qua* history. Yet Herder denies all claims to be able to perceive greater patterns and meaning within history, whereas spirit in a Hegelian sense includes not only Herder's historical individualities but also the powers that move them, and the destinies that they embrace. Herder offers a more epistemically humble enterprise, and perhaps his is more easily defended on the facts of history alone; but Hegel counts humility in the face of facts no virtue at all. History is there to see, and reason is able to perceive the movement of spirit within it, he says. Hegel's category of spirit is also broader than anything in Fichtean philosophy, because it takes in not only the Fichtean a priori point of view, but also the Herderian a posteriori. Spirit is not only radically subjective (as in Fichte's *Ich* philosophy), but externalizing as well, becoming objective in reality and absolute as truth. Fichte's *Ich = Ich* (Fichte *SW* 1:94) is but subjective spirit, spirit relating to itself, and as such is only the first movement of spirit. Hegel says the problem with the Fichtean idea is "that the ego [*Ich*] retains the significance of the individual, actual self-consciousness, as opposed to that which is universal or absolute, or to the spirit in which it is itself a moment merely; for the individual self-consciousness simply signifies standing apart as far as another is concerned" (Hegel *Werke* 20:408). In the face of all of these competing conceptions of history, Hegel has arranged it so that each has had its best insights taken up in a grander, more speculative category, namely spirit. History is not only human and progressive as with Voltaire, it is spiritual and necessary; history has to do with real events and peoples, as with Herder, but must make sense of those individual instances of human spirit within a larger, more meaningful whole; and history operates on both the a priori as well as the a posteriori level, contra Fichte, who would deny the events of history any real meaning.

8.2 Spiritual states

Hegelian spirit is the agent of human progress, such as it is; spirit moves peoples to bond as nations around shared concerns, and spirit draws these nations into formal relationships as states; spirit knows itself in subjective unity in the self, but also in objective diversity in reality and the positing of distinctions, and finally spirit attains itself as absolute truth. "The people – which in Hegel has been rationalized into the state – and history, the world spirit that develops itself dialectically, are united, in such a way … that in Hegel's metaphysics, the *Volksgeist* functions only as an instrument of the logical operation of the *Weltgeist*, or world spirit" (Schmitt 1986: 64). This is correct so long as one understands that the *Weltgeist* also functions only as an instrument of the social operation of the *Volksgeist*, the human spirit, *mutatis mutandis*. Schmitt's language appears to reduce the *Volksgeist* to a tool of the *Weltgeist*. However, if one bears in mind Schmitt's notion of sovereignty and democracy, his distinction becomes clearer. Parliamentarian government (equal representation and elections via ballot) can never truly be democratic; "the unanimous opinion of one hundred million private persons is neither the will of the people nor public opinion" (Schmitt 1988: 16). Whatever *κράτος* flows from the *δήμος* in a *δημοκρατία* is the organic unity of their spirit alone; as Schmitt has it, "the people exist only in the sphere of publicity" – else we are speaking of private persons, not the people. Similarly, only a unified sovereign spirit as *Weltgeist* can represent the *Volksgeist*, just as only a truly spiritual *Volksgeist* can give authority to the unity of an assertive *Weltgeist*. Hegelian *Geist* knows itself as intuition and image in the art and the culture of a people, it achieves feeling and external representation in religion, and finally attains pure freedom and reason in philosophy. When it comes to grand yet detailed gestures tracing the role of reason in human history, Hegel spares no difficulty. As "Hegel's grand philosophical category" (Olson 1992: 3), spirit is uniquely able to bear the weight of meaning which Hegel finds in world history.

Spiritual meaning is located concretely in states, as the actors in world history. Only states are bearers of freedom ("the state is the actuality of concrete freedom" Hegel *Werke* 7 §260), and as such world history is the history of the rise and fall of states. This in no way simply reaffirms the status quo of this or that state, as I discussed in detail within the context of Hegel's claims about the real and the rational. I take Žižek's use of the Hegelian notion of the state as more than bombast or rhetoric; it may be the case that only Žižek takes seriously enough Hegel's understanding of the state as the actual bearer of living, dynamic spirit even today:

> Perhaps then we should return to the very beginning, to the split in the Hegelian school between the revolutionary "young Hegelians" and the conservative "old Hegelians"?

What if the "original sin" of modern emancipatory movements can be traced back to the "young Hegelian" rejection of the authority and alienation of the state? What if … the contemporary Left were to re-appropriate the "old Hegelian" *topos* of a strong State grounded in a shared ethical substance? (Žižek 2011: 200)

Žižek's interpretation draws from his Marxian politics, but shelters within it a possible *rapprochement* between right (radical communitarian/Aristotelian) and left (radical socialist/Hegelian) notions of the state that could combine to overcome bourgeois liberal notions of abstract individualism, commodity fetishism, and moral relativism at the heart of modernity. Such a union of opposites would closely resemble Hegel's notion of the state as the bearer of freedom, properly understood. "World history is the progress of the consciousness of freedom – a progress whose necessity it is our business to comprehend" (Hegel *VPW* 63), and so Hegel sets out to uncover spirit in history by means of a detailed account of its actions in the states which have played a role in its development.

Hegel deals with more than just the individual spirits of the nations; spirit has to do both with humanity and the world itself. "The world spirit is the spirit of the world as it reveals itself through the human consciousness," says Hegel; "the relationship of men to it is that of single parts to a whole which is their substance" (*VPW* 60). *Realization* of freedom for individuals cannot be divorced from the *actualization* of freedom on the world stage – this was the mistake Kojève made in his reading of Hegel's life-and-death struggle in the *Phenomenology*. The freedom of the human consciousness is also the freedom of the world spirit: it is not enough for Europe to *know* that all are free (Hegel *Werke* 12:31). Freedom as such cannot only be announced, it has to be made *wirklich*, actual, which as discussed earlier is a technical term for Hegel: the *wirklich* is *vernüftig*, the rational is only that which is necessarily so. Concrete human freedom has not reached this stage in any world state of the past, the present, and is not realistically likely to do so in the future. Where does this leave Hegel's dialectic of freedom, spirit, and state? Answering this question forces us again to the myth of the end of history in Hegelian philosophy. The end of the realization of spirit in history (i.e. the end of history per se) would be the actual realization in history (and not just in potential) of the freedom of the subject to follow its own determination in accordance with reason. Until this condition is achieved – and it has not been achieved – any talk of the end of history is premature, and Hegel knows this. Hegelian spirit in its absolute form has everything to do with necessity and actuality. It will not do to say that the attainment of this or that *possibility* marks the end of history; possibility is a mark of contingency, and as such cannot be an attribute of the *absolute* (non-contingent) consummation of history, according to Hegel, nor can philosophy speak finally (absolutely) in any contingent realm. The owl of Minerva

flies only at twilight; philosophers cannot be prophets; these are not Hegelian turns of phrase, inserted to add a poetic flavor to what otherwise might be a dry philosophical ontology. Hegel means what he says: philosophy cannot pass judgment upon the ongoing futural development of spirit.

Because spirit strives for freedom in history, the various points in history when the awareness of freedom is attained are waypoints, and manifest as particular epochs. These epochs – Indian civilization, Roman civilization, etc. – are understood via Hegel's geographical metaphor in a linear fashion, quite contrary to Herder's simultaneous genesis of spirit in human cultures. Within the geographical metaphor of spiritual progression from east to west which Hegel uses in his philosophy of history, he identifies certain nation states as bearers of the knowledge of freedom, and this leads him to one of his more famous, and controversial, formulations: his "one, some, and all" notion of historical freedom. Hegel's geographical metaphor constrains his ability to consider the nations and countries which come under his scrutiny with true Herderian sensitivity. Once Hegel begins his "east to west" metaphor, it moves inexorably towards its culmination in the *Abendland*, the Occident, literally the "evening land" where the sun sets. As with the statement that "Europe is essentially the end of history," Hegel again seems to be in the grip of a spatial metaphor that is not adequate to the concept. So history begins in the east: "We can say that world history is the record of the spirit's efforts to attain knowledge of what it is in itself. *Die Orientalen* do not know that spirit or man as such are free in themselves. And because they do not know this, they are not free. They know only that one is free [*Sie wissen nur, daß Einer frei ist*]" (Hegel *VPW* 62). When Hegel speaks of "the East" in his philosophy, he usually has in mind the Middle East or Persia when he is speaking politically, since these were what the Greeks called the East. On the other hand, his lectures on the philosophy of world history begin with China, the Far East, and it is not always clear what nation or culture he means in any particular passage when he says "the East" unless he specifically singles out a nation for praise or censure. Nevertheless, his characterization of *die orientalische Welt* as a whole is consistent, whatever the specific context.

As previously discussed Hegel begins his geographical survey of spirit by saying that "the sun – light – rises in the east; light is simply self-involved existence" (Hegel *Werke* 12:133) and as such characterizes the glaring power of despotism, the government under which only one is truly free. In the East "we find a realized rational freedom, developing itself without advancing to *subjective* freedom," which is responsible and self-conscious. As a result, another metaphor emerges for Hegel: the East is "the childhood of history" (*Werke* 12:135). In the kingdoms of the east, only one bears the power and the responsibility of the nation. The populace are themselves wholly subject to the

will of the one, central power, however it manifests itself. There is a kind of freedom in this political childhood, like the irresponsible, dependent freedom of a human child, but it is completely subsumed within the arbitrary freedom of the one; the ruler is the spirit of the nation, and the spirit of the nation is the ruler. China is paradigmatic for Hegel:

> Chinese history represents the stage of human history in which all authority is vested in a single temporal manifestation of divine power, namely, the state as a mirror and representative of the heavenly hierarchy. China is thus for Hegel a necessary but surpassed relic of human history, unable to raise humankind beyond a naked worship of external power and socially sanctioned rituals and norms. (Dale 2010: 28–29)

As arbitrary, the manifestation of spirit in state power is self-centered (not self-reflective or self-conscious) and thus repetitive, caught in a great fugue of self-justification and consolidation of power. Such an epoch Hegel characterizes as *ungeschichtliche Geschichte* or "unhistorical history," because there is no novel progress of freedom (Hegel *Werke* 12:136). Because history is trapped in such an unhistorical dynamic, this state of affairs is able to maintain its asymmetrical equilibrium for untold millennia, explaining why the emergence of other forms of freedom emerge only comparatively late in the history of the human race.

The consciousness of the one who is free is not a true consciousness of freedom, and so the spirit has to develop new forms of power and emergence in human states that configure freedom a different way. As the spirit of freedom moved westward in the development of people, nations, and then states, Hegel says that it awoke within the Aegean πόλις a knowledge of self-consciousness, giving rise to recognizably philosophical thought. The "birth of philosophy" in ancient Greece was a favorite theme for German thinkers of the eighteenth century. The German philhellenism of Winckelmann and Herder held up Greece as a cultural ideal, a society in which art, religion, language, and literature had fused into a single *völkisch* identity. Hegel's location of the emergence of freedom in the Greek mind is but part and parcel of the movement to see Greece as the lost ideal of reason at the dawn of human history. But Hegel will not romanticize the Grecian urn, for Greek civilization is the "boyhood of history," not its maturity (Hegel *Werke* 12:137). Hegelian freedom emerges among the Greeks, "and on that account they were free; but they, like the Romans, knew only that some are free [*daß Einige frei sind*], and not humanity as such" (Hegel *VPW* 62). The free few among the Greeks were the citizens (Hegel has in mind Athenian democracy), but not the slaves. Greece's innovation was not its democracy but its cohesive πόλις, a "union of the moral [*Sittlichen*] and the subjective will" which Hegel (*Werke* 12:137) calls "the kingdom of beautiful freedom." Hegel here uses the word *Sittlichkeit* to indicate an ethic of belonging which characterizes a primal relationship between the πόλις and its parts. As

such, true individual morality, *Moralität* (Hegel follows Kant, that to be moral is to be rational), has not emerged in Greek freedom. Nor is it known among the Romans, who represent the "manhood of humanity" (*Werke* 12:138). What the Romans achieve in the development of freedom is the abstract notion of the state (the πόλις is not a state as such), with concomitant achievement of rights as such and thus personhood. True freedom eludes the Romans, however, because humanity in and of itself is not understood as free; freedom in the Roman Republic and later the Empire is a transactional freedom, qualified by one's standing in the Empire, and is therefore abstract because it does not inhere in humanity as such.

The attainment of freedom is first and foremost a religious triumph in Hegel's philosophy, for it comes on the scene first with the reconciliation brought about in Christianity (*Werke* 12:140). For Hegel, Christianity (specifically the radical freedom of the early Church and its later institutionalization in Protestantism) represents the absolute identification and reconciliation of the human and the divine; spirit that knows itself in-and-for-itself (*an-und-für-sich-selbst*), instead of only in various determinate forms. Christianity is the "consummate" religion, because in it "is manifest what spirit is, what God is" (Hegel *VPR* 1:91). Why does spirit come into its own in religion, when philosophy is the absolute form of spirit, the attainment of spiritual *Vernunft* from determinate *Verstand*? Because, "as Hegel never tired of arguing, logic had to be grounded in religion – in Christian anthropology – if proper account were to be made of the spiritual dimension of human nature" (Dickey 1993: 308). As already discussed, Hegel's is a philosophical account of religion. But as Hegel (*VPR* 3:184) says, "religion has its seat and soil in the activity of thinking" and so spirit comes to freedom in the purest form of representation, religion, before it achieves absolute completion in the higher knowledge of philosophy. Freedom as such, that is, freedom as a universal possibility of human nature, comes into its own with the birth of Christianity in the Middle East (specifically for Luther and Hegel in the Pauline doctrine of radical freedom in Christ, Gal. 3:28), Christianity's adoption and promulgation by the Romans, and its movement into the West with the Christian kingdoms of Europe. "The Germanic nations," by which Hegel means northwestern continental Europe and England, "with the rise of Christianity, were the first to realize that a person as a person is free [*daß der Mensch als Mensch frei ist*], and that freedom of the spirit is their very essence" (Hegel *VPW* 62). Following the temporal logic of his human developmental model, Hegel is compelled to call the German world the "old age" of humanity, though he is aware that the analogy breaks down: "natural old age is weakness, but the old age of spirit [*das Griesenalter des Geistes*] is its perfect maturity" (Hegel *Werke* 12:140; cf. Hegel *Werke* 12:116, where he speaks of the "beginning and end of world history, its rise and its decline [*Aufgang und Niedergang*]." Hegel cannot seem to make his metaphors quite work, and they

run ahead of and sometimes muddle the system in the very places where clarity is most called for).

Continuing his political/theological approach, Hegel claims that the reconciliation of spirit to itself first and most fully occurs within Christianity, and that the Germanic states of Europe are the heirs of this reconciliation. All the components of the historical dialectic meet and are suspended in the Christian story of the incarnation of Christ (the necessary union of the human and the divine, Hegel *VPR* 3:237–38), the death of Christ (the "speculative Good Friday," which indicates that negation as well as affirmation belongs to God as spirit, Hegel *Werke* 2:432–33; also, "The negative, the understanding, and death are necessary to the life of the spirit, according to Hegel, albeit along with the negation of negation, understanding, and death," Dahlstrom 2002: 14), and the resurrection of Christ (which is the ability of reason to rise from its ignorance and ascend to *das absolute Wissen*, the ultimate affirmation that the divine has human nature, and that human nature is divine, Hegel *VPR* 3:247). Without the presence of these acts in the spiritual reality of human nature, that is, without the activity of the divine in the human, the contradictions which had arisen in spirit as it moved from its dawn in Eastern despotism to its setting in the evening of Christian Europe could never have been overcome. In the Christian inheritance of the Germanic nations, "freedom has come to grips with how to realize its truth and its concept … This is the aim [*das Ziel*] of world history … and we have now a long path to tread in our consideration of world history before this has been stated clearly" (Hegel *Werke* 12:141). The remainder of the lectures on the philosophy of world history take up this "long path" and try to show the way that spirit has come into its own via the nations and states that have made up world history, from the east to the west.

8.3 Hegelian ends

For all its importance and grandiosity, there remains something melancholy and even anticlimactic about Hegelian spirit-language in history. The geography of spirit begins by mapping the language of *der Geist* widely across social, theological, and metaphysical landscapes, but finally peters out in a narrow metaphorical trajectory that funnels the atlas of spirit into a single, one-way lane which ends on the western shores of history. Hegel has created such a powerful image with his sunrise–sunset/childhood–old age metaphor that he is forced to play it out, even though it is contrary to his deeper dialectical-historical commitments. The riddle of the sphinx to Oedipus displays this "sunrise–sunset" movement as well, though preserving the idea that neither the rising nor the setting is as powerful as the noonday – "What goes on four legs in the morning, on two legs at noon, and on three legs in the evening?" Apollodorus (*The Library* 3.5 §8) records a different version of the riddle: "What is that which

has one voice and yet becomes four-footed and two-footed and three-footed?" This version loses the "sunrise–sunset" aspect, but (in a more Hegelian vein!) understands the being of the riddle to speak with one voice in three different ways. That is, the spirit of the being (man) speaks with a different voice depending upon the progress of its spirit – is it young? mature? aged? Nevertheless, any reading of the riddle undermines Hegel's intention, just as Hegel's own "sunrise–sunset" image cannot bear the weight of meaning he hopes that it can. McCarney's argument (2000: 174) that what Hegel is doing here is pressing an arresting though flawed metaphor past its breaking point is important; one ought not lean on Hegel's metaphorical edifice too much, lest it break beneath the weight. It is a seductive image, to be sure, full of explanatory value and elegant in its summation. It also feels fully in line with the cultural and political prejudices one often assumes Hegel must have shared with his European confrères; once spirit as thought and culture has developed in the West, there is nowhere left to go. The problem with this reading is that it is untrue; or rather, it does not square with the story of spirit and history that emerges from the full panoply of Hegelian philosophy. And yet, no one could deny that Hegelian philosophy is rife with end-language. The central Hegelian language of contingency (requiring the dialectic, *διαλεκτική*) and necessity (grounded in speculation, *θεωρία*) demands a discussion of ends in the dialectical tension generated between these two poles. And while it is true that Hegel never says that history ends (recall Nietzsche's "five words") this may all be beside the point: so what if he never says this? Surely Engels is at least partly correct, the dialectic does necessitate ends, and Hegel in fact speaks of ends – and not only dialectical ends, but of real terminations. One such end is the controversial "end of art" thesis found throughout the Hegelian corpus. By looking at some of the details of this particular Hegelian end, it becomes easier to see just what sorts of ends Hegelian philosophy endorses.

The end of art encompasses the move from sensuous art (architecture, sculpture) to intellectual art (painting, music, and poetry), and then the move from "the poetry of imagination to the prose of thought" (Hegel *Werke* 13:123) – that is, to religion, then philosophy. Art does not abandon thought to imagination, however. "How art is thought-like is thus central to the two problems of Hegel's aesthetics: the problem of the role of the art of the past in the mental life of the present, and the problem of showing the way in which art constitutes an exercise of the mind's freedom, its role in the life of the spirit" (Podro 1982: 18). Art, according to Hegel, is the first mode of absolute spirit as it transcends the limited confines of merely subjective spirit (the human soul and consciousness) and merely objective spirit (law, morality, and social life). The earliest explication of this idea is found at the conclusion of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hegel *Werke* 3:324ff.), where the movement is from (i) self-alienated spirit in culture and self-assured spirit in morality to (ii) conscious spirit in

religion (Hegel's discussion of art is found here) and finally (iii) spirit as absolute knowledge. In the *Phenomenology*, art is part of religion because both are *Vorstellungsdenken* and as such religion as art does not rise to the level of philosophical, absolute *Wissen*. Natural religion expresses itself in and through the forms of nature, such as the sun and the moon, and the human art that characterizes *die natürliche Religion* is architecture (*Werke* 3:510) because it begins to frame the world for spirit to know itself in human life. The Druidic sacred grove, the Mayan archaeoastronomical temples which map the movement of the sun, the Japanese *torii* gate which in its enshrining of negative space allows for the divinization of the entire world; these are physical picture frames which interact with the natural world in which spirit as the divine comes close to spirit as human consciousness. In architecture, spirit dwells, but it is not yet fully present to self-consciousness. "This dwelling [*Wohnung*]," writes Hegel, is "the aspect of the universal element or the inorganic nature of spirit" (*Werke* 3:510). External spirit is housed and dwells, but it does not belong as such, it is still unknown to itself as itself. At this stage, art as architecture is the realm of the artificer, not the artist.

Juxtaposed with and succeeding natural religion is what Hegel calls *die Kunstreligion* proper. Here the spirit is artist, creating out of its own transcendence of the world of nature. "If we then ask which is the *actual* spirit [*der* wirkliche *Geist*], the one that has the consciousness of absolute being in the religion of art, it follows that it is the *ethical* or the *true* spirit [*die* sittliche *oder der* wahre *Geist*]" (*Werke* 3:512). Recalling the previous discussion about *Wirklichkeit* (section 7.2 above), Hegel is saying that, as *actual*, spirit, spirit conscious of itself in the religion of art, is necessary and rational. Spirit becomes actual, that is, necessary and actual, only when it enters into the body of the people in which it will find itself. Spirit then becomes social, situated, *sittlich*, within the customs (*die Sitte*) and ethics (ἔθος) of the people (ἔθνος) (Hegel uses *Sittlichkeit* in all instances to stand in for the Greek word ἔθος, the "ethical life" of a "people," ἔθνος). Accordingly, spirit which is at one with the body of the people is "*der* Kultus" (*Werke* 3:521) or religious group, first and foremost, for religion is a public, corporate affair (religion is *religare*, that which "ties or binds" people together). Spirit in *die Kunstreligion* is *wirklich* because it is necessary and rational; it is *sittliche* because it is at one with the norms, values, and traditions of the people within whom it knows itself; and it is *wahre* because it is not self-contradictory but rather comes to know itself (truly) as itself, and because it is the whole, the suspension of the external spirit of nature within the internal spirit of the people as the cult. Here, absolute spirit and the spirit of a people exist as one; each is the expression of the other.

Greece represents the religion of art, and it reaches its fullest potential in sculpture, because in it spirit is represented in the highest form, the human self. Art as art reaches its climax here, but spirit as spirit does not. Art ceases to

be the finest (Hegel's preferred term *höchster*, "highest") medium for expressing spirit when spirit moves beyond objectification and begins the process of self-conscious striving. According to Hegel, this leads one from abstract art (art as an art-object), to the living (*lebendige*) work of art (absolute spirit seeking a more live expression in human form). Hegel locates this form of art in the Greek mystery religions, which still hold back what they hide, that is, the wine of the mystery religion is not yet the "mystery of flesh and blood" (*Werke* 3:527) revealed. The medium of art is no longer adequate to what it seeks to express. Finally, the last form of art is "spiritual" art, wherein spirit is fully expressed in the life of the human form, though still only represented. In the *Phenomenology* Hegel identifies spiritual art with Greek drama and dwells on this subject at length. In Greek epic poetry (meant to be recited before the assembly), and in tragedy and comedy, the national (public) spirit is manifested within the bodies of those who act out the movement of gods and heroes in their actions. "In themselves they are the common substance of that which the *self-conscious* essence *in itself* is and does" (*Werke* 3:530) – but they are not themselves self-conscious spirit, not yet. Such art is spiritual (*geistig*) because it is public, whereas *das lebendige Kunstwerk* is more physical and initiatory in the mystery religions of wine and revelry. All three forms of *die Kunstreligion* are instances of spirit's emergence into self-consciousness through sensual forms without spirit expressing itself fully in any of these forms. Spirit is still at arm's length in representational art, it has not yet come to know itself as itself. Sculpture was once able to express spirit's evolution of self-consciousness, but it was only a stage along the way to spirit's full self-understanding, bound to be surpassed, and no subsequent form of art has been adequate to spirit's striving. Only within sculpture did spirit and the medium coincide. Spirit inevitably moves on, while the forms in which it once expressed itself remain as they were.

Beyond the religion of art in the *Phenomenology* is what Hegel calls the revealed religion, which is religion no longer bound by external sensual forms. Art no longer plays a role in spirit's progress of self-knowledge, for "God is only attainable through pure speculative knowledge and is only in such knowledge, and is that knowledge, for he is spirit; and this speculative knowledge is the knowledge of revealed religion" (*Werke* 3:554). The arrival of speculative knowledge coincides with the incarnation of God in Christ in Hegelian philosophy, which reveals the "immediately present God" (*Werke* 3:555). As art is the quintessential form of mediation for Hegel, art is surpassed by immediate religion as an adequate mode of spirit's self-evolution. Art, as an adequate medium for spirit's self-expression, has come to an end. Hard on the heels of this overcoming, however, is Hegel's judgment on religious *Vorstellungsdenken* as well. "There are three distinct moments," Hegel writes, "essence [*des Wesens*], being for itself [*des Fürsichseins*], which is the otherness of essence and that for

which essence is, and being for itself or knowledge of the self *in the other* [*des Fürsichseins … im Anderen*]" (*Werke* 3:559). In theological language, these three moments correspond to the Trinity, i.e. God as Father (God as essential God), God as Son (God from God who is God), and God as Spirit (God in God's people, the body of the Church) – "Spirit is therefore set forth in the third element, in common [*allgemeinen*] self-consciousness; it is its community [*Gemeinde*]" (*Werke* 3:568). Yet for all this, spirit is still limited to pictures or images (*Vorstellungen*), and not fully self-conscious. "The *content* of these images is absolute spirit; all that remains to be done is to suspend this mere form" in self-consciousness as such (*Werke* 3:575). Spirit becomes conscious of itself in its various objective forms, and at the same time suspends those forms in its own self-knowing as absolute knowing (*das absolute Wissen*). The various methods of externalization such as religion and art are transcended by philosophy in the trajectory of spirit's coming to know itself as itself in human history and must therefore be consigned, however important they are, to the past and its struggles with the self-conscious *Idee*. Only to the extent that spirit externalizes itself (*das Fürsichsein*) and at the same time remains itself (*das Ansichsein*) (*Werke* 3:588) can it be absolute knowing, *das Anundfürsichseiende*. So ends the *Phenomenology of Spirit.*

Hegel's doctrine of the place of art in the history of spirit is greatly expanded years later for his lectures on the philosophy of art, first given in Heidelberg in 1818 and then four times in Berlin from 1820 to 1829. These lectures follow the philosophical layout of the place of art in the history of spirit which Hegel works out subsequently to the arrangement found in the *Phenomenology*, however, namely in the final chapter of the *Wissenschaft der Logik* (1816) and in §§556–63 of the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (1817). Art still occupies pride of place as one of the forms of absolute spirit, but it has been separated (somewhat) from religion, and it is still an inferior though necessary stage of spirit's progress towards self-consciousness. The *Encyclopedia* and the lectures on aesthetics represent an advance and an improvement on Hegel's concept of art in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in that art occupies its own space in the outworking of spirit formally disentangled from religion (though still expressed in religious terms) and achieves a sort of autonomy in line with Kant's ideas in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* §44: "fine art … is a kind of representation that is purposive in itself [*die für sich selbst zweckmäßig ist*] and, though without an end [*ohne Zweck*], nevertheless promotes the cultivation of the mental powers for sociable communication" (Kant *GS* 5:306). In the *Phenomenology*, art and religion occupy the same stage (art is the form of religion/religion is the content of art); in the lectures on art in particular, art is promoted to a sphere of spirit all its own, and also demoted to a level below that of religion – religion is less representational, less sensual or physical, and so is a higher stage in the development of spirit while still inferior to philosophy or

pure intellection as such. For Hegel, this means that art, while a defunct vehicle for spirit, also has its own value and must be studied in detail and in context. "Hegel envisaged a possible end in art while simultaneously establishing the discourse of art history on a new level" (Belting 2003: 174) – not without reason does Gombrich (1984: 51) call Hegel the "father of the history of art." In both the *Enzyklopädie* and the lectures on aesthetics Hegel studies art conceptually as (i) symbolic art in Persia, India, and Egypt; (ii) the classical art of the Greeks and, to a lesser extent, the Romans; and (iii) romantic art in the Christian Church, the medieval period, and the modern West. Within this conceptual framework (which follows the geographical metaphors of east–west spirit found in the philosophy of history and elsewhere), Hegel situates the specific arts: architecture (symbolic and classical), sculpture (for Hegel, paradigmatic of classical art), and then painting, music, and poetry (the romantic arts). Within these conceptual and specific stages of art, Hegel visualizes a matrix of meaning that maps spirit not only across the east–west axis but also as either objective or subjective. In so doing he locates the importance of art for the development of absolute spirit, as well as drawing art to an end.

At the heart of this matrix is Hegel's discussion in the *Logik* and *Enzyklopädie* of how the absolute idea moves from art to religion and from religion to philosophy. "Art and religion are the different ways *die Idee* comes to realize itself and give itself suitable being; philosophy has the same content and the same end [*denselben Zweck*] as art and religion, but it is the highest way, in which *die absolute Idee* realizes itself, because its way is the highest, the concept [*der Begriff*]" (Hegel *Werke* 6:549). In Hegel's typology, architecture is concrete, objective spirit; it is solid, external, and is a medium for spirit's becoming known in the community but is not in itself a way into spirit's self-consciousness. Sculpture, which for Hegel in its classical form completes art's destiny within the history of spirit, is perfectly objective and concrete in that it is physical stuff, and as in the *Phenomenology*, it is figurative of the highest form of spirit, the human form: "Among these forms the human is the highest and most true, because only in it can the spirit have its corporeality and thus its visible expression" (Hegel *Werke* 10 §558). At its most basic, Hegel's declaration of the end of art rests on this statement alone. The highest visible, actual physical form spirit can take is the human form, "in the sensual, mundane world only the human is spiritual; thus if the spiritual is to take a sensual form, it must be a human form" (Hegel *VPR* 3:239), and it has taken that highest form only twice in history: first, for art, in the classical sculpture of Greece and its representation of the human form in marble; and second, for religion, in the incarnation of God in Christ. Insofar as religion is a *higher* form of spirit's knowledge of itself as itself, the incarnation (Latin *incarnare*, "to make flesh") surpasses art as sculpture, human flesh being the actual human form, not an artistic copy; and insofar as religion is a *lesser* form of absolute knowledge than philosophy,

after the incarnation comes the death of Christ and the resurrection of the spirit into the community, the Church, and so religion is surpassed by philosophy, which alone can understand spirit as the concept, *der Begriff*.

The shift in Hegel's philosophy from full objectivity in sculpture to nascent subjectivity in painting evinces the passing away or "end" of art. It is in this turn, however insubstantial it may seem, that Hegel's theory takes shape. The objectivity of spirit in sculpture, which coincides with spirit's realization of its own objectivity in the actual world, is found in the curves and cold surfaces of flawless Grecian marble, which shelter within themselves the gaze of objective spirit as it looks out at the world that gazes upon it (Hegel seems to be unaware that plain marble is a legacy of the Renaissance and that Greek sculptures were usually painted in bright, primary colors). The mute thingness of the sculpture is its power to fully shape the mind of human spirit and move it beyond itself to the God which inhabits it. Not so in painting. While the objective force of spirit is lost in the brush strokes which elaborate the pliant canvas, the painting shelters within itself another, even greater power of self-becoming spirit. In painting, the two-dimensionality of the canvas brings into play human imagination in a way that, according to Hegel, sculpture does not: painting "sets us on the path to finite and infinite subjectivity in itself for the first time, the principle of our own being and life, and in its images we see what is effective and active in ourselves" (Hegel *Werke* 15:17). Consequently painting demands more of the observer and involves them in the world of the work in a new way. Hegel believes that painting fires the subjective imagination and accomplishes the leap beyond mute objectivity which sculpture was unable to attempt.

In art as painting, the observer becomes participant for the first time. Of course, in architecture the participation of the people in the rites of the temple or the commerce of the hall is what brings spirit to presence. But in the temple, as in the statue or sculpture that is the focal point of the architect's visual lines, humanity is summoned to gaze. It is as if the sculpture says, "Look upon me, see what I am and in so doing see what is." This is true for Hegel whether the statue is a crude idol hacked from flint or Phidias' chryselephantine Zeus. But the painting says, "Look upon me, imagine what I am and in so doing imagine what you may be." Painting evokes the sociality of reason which Pinkard describes as the essence of Hegelian spirit. Expressing himself in theological terms, Hegel says:

> In sculpture the God stands over against vision as a mere object, while in contrast in painting the divine appears in itself as a living spiritual subject which enters the community [*die Gemeinde*] and offers each individual the possibility of placing themselves in spiritual communion [*Gemeinschaft*] and intercession with it. The underlying substance is not, as in sculpture, a self-insistent, immobile individuum, but rather has entered into and become particular within the community. (Hegel *Werke* 15:17–18)

When spirit moves from objectivity to subjectivity, it turns away from art, seeking fuller expression in religion (or to put it in terms of sociality, humans turn from the inwardness of art to the self-expression of their own nature in community; echoes of Aristotle's *πολιτικὸν ζῷον*). Once religion surpasses art in Hegel's system, there is no question that meaningful artistic endeavor continues, but it demonstrates a spiritual falling away from concrete reconciliation into the realm of feeling as spirit transitions into increasingly romantic art in painting, music, and poetry. Art has not been the highest mode of human spiritual expression since the Greeks. For Hegel, Greek art is "the highest expression [*höchste Ausdruck*] of the absolute" while romantic art, though later, "points to a higher form of consciousness than art can disclose" (Hegel *Werke* 14:26–27). In the medieval period spirit best expressed itself in religion, and for Hegel, with the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment, spirit knows itself without sensual representation purely in philosophy.

Central to his concept of art as well as history is Hegel's doctrine that spirit is infinite, but that this is a conceptual rather than actual reality. Hegel never artificially opposes finitude to infinitude, privileging one over the other. The dialectical movement of spirit forbids any foreclosure of the future but at the same time the dialectic itself is limited to how it has become what it now is through the concrescence of past historical occasions. Spirit becomes, nations progress or regress, arts develop and decay, individuals self-actualize within what David Kolb calls "a limited repertory of possibilities." Kolb's point is further insight into what Hegel means by the end of history and also elaborates the place of art in the system: "Hegel believes that we are at a privileged point in history, the time when all this becomes clear, the end of history insofar as it has been a development towards that clarity. What becomes clear, however, is not an endless future of ever new forms for thought and action but the limited rational forms for human action" (Kolb 1986: 79). Artistic forms are among these limited rational forms. Insofar as history has produced a moment of clarity for spirit, as it does in classical Greece with sculpture, end-language is appropriate. Further, such an "end" forecloses certain aims for the future, but offers up others. Whitehead's metaphysics suggests that this is the dynamic of experience in each and every actual occasion; *every* point in history is a privileged one, since history goes on from *here*. Sculpture is simply singled out by Hegel as a crucial transition point. Consider this in light of Maurer's (1996: 202) insight on Hegelian spirit: "In Hegel, the concept of Spirit … makes the middle of history the middle of every epoch and of every realizable present in every moment of the life and death of every individual." Hegel privileges his own perspective, it is true, but his entire philosophical project turns out to be in line with his own claim in the *Rechtsphilosophie* that philosophy is "its own time comprehended in thought" (Hegel *Werke* 7:26). Though Hegel never claims that history "ends" in the way that the Hegel mythology understands it,

his philosophy of art and philosophy of history demonstrate how the Hegelian system envisions the sorts of ends that do in fact happen in the life of spirit.

Does history end in the way that art does, according to Hegel? No. History cannot have this sort of end, and it is a category mistake to understand the "end" of history in this way. Art is *a form* of spirit; history is *the realm* of spirit. One can end, be overcome or transcended; the other cannot. One is a finite expression of spirit bound to temporal human manifestations; the other, the temporal matrix within which spirit comes to know itself as itself and without which spirit has no meaning. Art is a finite sort of thing (a discrete expression of concrete human endeavor) that can end, but history is not a sort of thing per se. Hegel speaks about the world of post-art in a way that he never speaks of post-history. "Now just as art has in nature and the finite realm of life its *before*, likewise it also has its *after*, i.e. a region which in turn passes beyond [*überschreitet*] its manner of conceptualizing and representing the absolute" (Hegel *Werke* 13:141). He explicitly states that within the logic of the dialectic finite or subjective ends cannot be absolute because they are never rational in the sense of being necessary. The mechanistic end of external contingency (which is clearly on display in the "end" of art, as spirit progresses beyond finite *Vorstellungsdenken*) cannot express the absolute. History is never superseded in the way that art is, and in fact could never be. History *is* the realm in which spirit continually becomes what it is and comes to know itself as itself. History is the grotto of perception from which sense-certainty crawls and comes to know the truth of self-certainty in the dawning of self-consciousness. History is the battlefield of the master and the servant, wherein they come to realize their intertwined destiny. History is the schoolroom within which reason discovers individuality, writes laws, and debates virtues. History is the realm of the ethical spirit, terrified at its own freedom, the refuge of the beautiful soul, and the gateway into religion and the divine. History is the matrix within which art, religion, and philosophy map the geography of spirit. It is not a sort of thing that could end, either as a temporal reality or as a venue for the realization of spirit. Nowhere does Hegel advocate for or conceptualize ahistorical spirit (I include in this claim the chapters in the *Phenomenology* on consciousness) – the very idea is contradictory within the bounds of Hegelian thought.

Spirit, τέλος, and the elimination of contingency: these are the guiding principles of Hegel's thought. Situating Hegel's end-language within these concepts, it becomes clear that we can speak of the end of art, but not the end of history – at least, not in the same way. Recall that Kant says that art is *zweckmäßig ohne Zweck*. This formulation is not enough for Hegel. If art is without purpose and yet is *zweckmäßig* this could only mean that it chases its tail, locked in a narcissistic subjectivity that poses as autonomy. A purpose that originates within oneself and remains there is too abstract (note the parallels with Hegel's critique of Kantian ethics). Hegelian philosophy must say that art

is *zweckmäßige mit einem Zweck*: purposive (in itself) with a purpose (beyond itself). The terms of the "beyond itself" make all the difference when considering how something ends for Hegelian thought. Hegelian spirit is driven by an inward teleology, and as such, historical spirit is internally processive and immanently active in and through history. Art is a critical aspect of spirit's activity in history; art is one of the most important ways that spirit, as *historical*, develops itself. The difference lies in the fact that art is superseded (there is a post-art), whereas history culminates (there is no post-history). These are two different ends. Studying Hegel's philosophy of art helps us to see what sort of ends count as ends for Hegel, and so clarify what does and does not end in history. History, as the realm within which spirit comes to know itself, is never and can never be superseded. It can and does reach climaxes or *culminations*, though those are at best open to interpretation; for Hegel, Napoleon's triumphs were certainly historical culminations, as well as instances of the birth of something new in the world. Kojève saw such a culmination in a Marxian interpretation of Hegelianism; Fukuyama saw a culmination at the end of the Cold War and the hegemony of liberal capitalism; and Žižek sees a culmination in the revolutionary year 2011 – the Arab Spring, the global Occupy movement, etc. – which he calls in the title of one of his works "the year of dreaming dangerously" (Žižek 2012b). Whether any of these are ends (*τέλη*) of history, none of them is the end of history.

9 The present and the future

> That philosophy died *one day*, *within* history, or that it has always fed upon its own agony, on the violent way it opens history by opposing itself to non-philosophy, which is its past and its concern, its death and its wellspring; that beyond the death, or dying nature, of philosophy, perhaps even because of it, thought still has a future, or even, as it is said today, is still entirely to come because of what philosophy has held in store; or, more strangely still, that the future itself has a future – all these are unanswerable questions. By right of birth, and for one time at least, these are problems put to philosophy as problems philosophy cannot resolve.
>
> Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 1982

> If Hegel had written his entire *Logik* and said in the preface that it was merely a thought experiment in which he had even shirked things in various places, he would no doubt have been the greatest thinker that ever lived.
>
> Søren Kierkegaard, *Journals and Papers*

9.1 Cunning

If one compares the forms of law and state in *Philosophy of Right*'s "Transition from State to World History" (*Werke* 7 §340) at the end of the text (§§352–60) with the lengthy discussion in the philosophy of history, it is obvious that Hegel's geography of spirit in the lectures is remarkably similar to Fichte's historical trajectory, in that Fichte begins with Asia and ends with Europe. Hegel is in fact following out the schema presented in his *Philosophy of Right* whereby he describes the "four realms of world history" (Hegel recommended the above sections of the *Rechtphilosophie* to his students in his lectures on the philosophy of world history). There is an important difference between Fichte and Hegel which emerges as one looks at the course of the lectures, however: in his philosophical accounting of world history, Hegel does not rely on a top-down understanding of *der Weltplan* (Hegel does assume rationality as an a priori assumption, as I discussed previously; cf. Hegel *VPW* 32). According to Fichte, reason is the hidden mover of all that happens in history, whereas for Hegel reason, though also a hidden mover, becomes itself as spirit through the events of history; history is the incarnation of spirit. Thus Lakeland (1984:

61): "the incarnation in the Christian sense is the revelation of the truth of the relation of absolute *Geist* and human being. It is not incarnation that accounts for the consistency of the philosophical vision with the facts of experience, but it is in the incarnation, *ordo essendi*, that the trope by which experience can be interpreted is manifest." The importance of the incarnation for Hegel is its immanent teleology, the fact that it operates from within as a divination of the world through an encounter and experience with one person. Divinity becomes humanity within time and as finite reality, showing the infinitude of the human and the finitude of the divine. How does this affect and effect human history? For Hegel, *die Idee* as reason is always present in history, but never in a robust Fichtean form. Only in incarnational theology does the concept operate openly and absolutely within human life, and even there it is within the mysterious relational matrix which faith calls God as Trinity. Rather, reason operates in history as a sort of immanent manipulation among and within finite historical consciousness, a kind of "cunning" which uses the real losses and gains of history to its own ends. This is the oft-misunderstood notion called by Hegel in various places *die List der Vernunft*, the "cunning of reason" (in German, *die List* can range from "artfulness" and "stratagem" to "deceit" and even "fraud"; "cunning" is the generally agreed-upon translation, which takes a more neutral path between appealing and appalling). Hegel talks of *die List* as if it were an engine driving history onwards towards its teleological *Endzweck*, and so it demands attention in any study attempting to ascertain what a Hegelian end might mean.

For all the attention the concept has received in scholarship, the cunning of reason enters into Hegel's philosophy at various places but is never fully thematized. In the Preface to the *Phänomenologie* Hegel says (*Werke* 3:53) that the "immanent self" of the content of thought is the "cunning [*die List*]" which looks on though appearing inactive; in the *Wissenschaft der Logik* he speaks of both the "cunning of the concept [*die List des Begriffs*]" (*Werke* 5:398) and the "cunning of reason [*List der Vernunft*]" (*Werke* 6:452); and also in the *Enzyklopädie* (*Werke* 8 §209) and the lectures on the philosophy of history (*Werke* 12:49, 119; *VPW* 105). Nevertheless, the implications of the notion are far-reaching, and have been taken by commentators interested in a totalitarian reading of Hegel's work as affirmation that something sinister is happening in the relationship between the individual, the state, and reason. Hegel writes that the realized end or purpose (*Zweck*) which appears as objectivity exerts some violence upon the object which is its means of realization. However, "that the purpose sets itself a *mediational* relation with the object and *inserts* another object *between* itself and it, may be regarded as the *cunning* of reason" (*Werke* 6:452). Such "cunning" is a mediational concept because it works between phenomenal reality and the events which happen within and through that reality. *Die List* is also a hermeneutical concept or a mechanism by which one

is able to interpret the movement of history after the fact. The initial aims of internal reason are worked out via human passions through the subconscious or non-conscious participation of reason in the actions. Hegel has no expectation that human culture is conscious of its role in the movement of spirit, so he needs some way to explain the impetus towards freedom in history. Hegel is also unwilling to call history a stage upon which God or reason directs the events of history by dint of sheer will, without the participation of humanity as the finite agent of change. *Die List* lets Hegel describe free human actions as the means by which reason achieves its aims; it is essentially a heuristic device. Lukács points out that *die List der Vernunft* is a concept tied to the real/rational formulation in the *Rechtphilosophie*. *Die List* "can only claim to be more than a myth if authentic reason can be discovered and demonstrated in a truly concrete manner. In that case it becomes a brilliant explanation for the stages of history that have not yet become conscious" (Lukács 1972: 146). The picture that emerges is of a relationship in which the results of human actions are taken up by universal reason and arranged in such a way that its own ends are fostered; freedom is preserved on both sides of the equation, humans act freely and reason freely uses these actions to further its own purposes.

Bear in mind the earlier discussion about Hegel's complicated geography of spirit. The cunning of reason is a Hegelian metaphor; *die List* is no more some hyperreal transcendental agent which moves people and nations about like pieces on a gameboard than is *der Geist*. The cunning of reason is the internal teleological achievement of the formal-final cause of an action within history understood after the fact. In his lectures on the philosophy of history, Hegel uses *die List* to explain the relationship between the subjective purpose of a finite agent (its "mechanistic" drive, the Aristotelian material/efficient causes) and the objective purpose of reason (its "teleological" achievement, the formal-final causes) (cf. Wilkins 1974: 90–91). The subjective purpose is always already a substantive part of the object itself, but it needs mediation which is able to suspend both the subjective and objective purposes in a higher, actual truth. Hegel writes, "That the subjective purpose, as the power of these processes … keeps itself *outside of them* and *preserves itself* in them, is the *cunning* of reason" (Hegel *Werke* 8 §209). What is "cunning" about reason is that finite subjective purposes are always suspended (*aufhebt*) into higher objective purposes. Hegel's cunning of reason is not a "thing," it is a happening or event (no more than reason or spirit or the concept are "things" for Hegel, or *das Ereignis* is a "thing" for Heidegger). The cunning of reason is the unconcealment of the "thingness" of a thing – it is the way a thing outs. When Whitehead describes the becoming of an actual occasion to be the satisfaction of the initial aim given by the eternal object, he and Hegel are saying the same thing, with one difference: for Whitehead, an eternal object is within the primordial nature of God (Whitehead 1978: 46) and is given its initial aim by God

(108); whereas for Hegel, God is always already God *within* the process and therefore the aim or purpose is immanent to the process itself. The deep similarities (and differences) between Hegelian and Whiteheadian metaphysics are the deep similarities (and differences) between Aristotelian and Platonic metaphysics, respectively, and almost always for the same reasons.

Die Idee works itself out within the finite aims of humanity and yet achieves aims that are greater than (and even opposed to, at times) finite human aims: "the many become one, and are increased by one" (Whitehead 1978: 21). The "increase" is the cunning work of immanent reason in the creation of value within the world of finite beings. This is a human, not a transcendent, happening. What the discussion in the *Enzyklopädie* adds to the notion is the idea of the inexorable *power* of the cunning of reason. In the *Logik* the relationship between human ends pursued within a limited horizon of meaning and the *Endzweck* envisioned by the cunning of reason seem to be understood as a more mutual give-and-take, with the free actions of the human spirit serving as the gradual and covert means by which *die Idee* attains absolute knowledge of itself. In the *Enzyklopädie*, however, Hegel emphasizes the ineluctable sway reason holds over the self-definition and processive development of the absolute idea. "Reason is as *cunning* as it is *powerful*," he says, so that "while it lets objects affect each other according to their own nature and finish each other off, without mixing itself up in the process it nevertheless brings only *its own* purpose to completion" (Hegel *Werke* 8 §209, *Zusatz*). The change in emphasis arises because in the *Enzyklopädie* Hegel speaks of the cunning of reason in theological as well as philosophical terms. Hegel identifies reason with God, saying "divine providence conducts itself with absolute cunning. God takes a hands-off approach to people and their particular passions and interests, yet what comes about is under the complete guidance of *his* intentions" (*Werke* 8 §209, *Zusatz*). This section is the fullest and probably the clearest exposition of *die List der Vernunft* in Hegel's writings. Clearly, *die List* operates in this passage as a philosophical twin to the traditional notion of divine providence; Hegel's identification of the two seems straightforward. It is the sort of language found in *Enzyklopädie* §209 that tends to worry critics of Hegel's philosophy of history. At first glance, this is as close as Hegel ever comes to the Fichtean notion of an a priori divine *Weltplan*, and the cunning of reason appears to offer a serious challenge to Hegel's insistence that it is *freedom* and its development which concerns the philosophy of history.

But Hegel does not envision the process of world history in this way at all. *Geist* – understood as God, divine providence, social reason, individual intention – does not decide from the beginning its aims and then work to achieve these as human history plays itself out. Such an external and positivistic notion of history is foreign to Hegel's overall philosophical schema, though Hegel is often read as advocating just such a notion. The temporal advance of world

history is primarily an *immanent* process, and partakes of a *teleological* matrix rather than simply a mechanistic or linear progression; the difference being that a τέλος is an organic aim which originates from its *own* formal-final nature, whereas a line is drawn mechanically in order to relate points *A* and *B* and so on until the points are connected. The τέλος arises from the make-up of the historical trajectory within history itself, it is not given from some external, infinite, connective point of view. It is an *immanent* teleology (cf. Fulda 2003: 227). Hegelian τέλη, like Aristotelian τέλη, are inward drives, never simply outward goals. Hegel is explicit about this in the *Logik*: "The more the teleological principle was associated with the concept of an *otherworldly* intellect … the more it seemed to depart from a true investigation of nature, which seeks to understand the properties of nature not as alien, but rather as *immanent determinants* [*als* immanente Bestimmtheiten]" (Hegel *Werke* 6:438). Fichte's philosophy of history is a series of a priori lines drawn across the map of human existence; Herder's is a series of immanent τέλη with no lines to connect them at all (or at least, the lines are broken, requiring the historian to fill them in); Hegel's philosophy of history takes both of these positions and suspends them in an immanent dialectic whereby the individual aims and the overall purpose work together to produce the temporal happenings we call "world history." The cunning of reason is the language we use when we interpret the value that is achieved or lost in our assessment of the temporal happenings.

There are essentially three ways to interpret Hegel's philosophical history and discussion of the end once comparison with the philosophy of art has clarified what kinds of ends Hegel might countenance. One is to see Hegel's end of history as a finite, concrete historical end driven by an agent-oriented teleology; that is, (i) the *mechanistic* reading. There is not and will never be an end to possible mechanisms which drive this external agency: God, nature, the logic of capital/labor/the state/the people/*ad infinitum ad nauseam*. Such is the path taken by most interpreters who argue an end of history in Hegel, as well as those who muster the end of history to prove their own assertions about history ("this is the judgment of God"; "this is nature's retribution"; "this is the triumph of capitalism"), but it is not Hegel's path. The second reading is the one I describe in this book, which understands the power of spirit in history to be an internal but finite teleology, a processive dialectic of becoming which cannot be arrested but which slips away from any metaphysical system (even Hegel's own) that tries to contain it, even conceptually. In this (ii) *processive* or *evental* reading of Hegel's philosophy of history, Hegel's agent-oriented terms (the cunning of reason, world-historical individuals) are understood as forms of Hegelian metaphoric *Vorstellungsdenken* which must be seen as conceptual attempts at describing a dynamic process through time and history. What it "achieves" is itself, its own formal-final cause given by itself and from within its own finite, temporal nature, not some preordained external end that

ushers in *das Ende*. The third path is the (iii) *tragic* reading Žižek describes, Hegel's "'tragic' vision of the social process where no hidden teleology is guiding us, where every intervention is a jump into the unknown, where the result always thwarts our expectations." In this historical vision, "All we can be certain of is that the existing system cannot reproduce itself indefinitely: whatever will come after will not be 'our future' … We should fully accept this openness, guiding ourselves on nothing more than ambiguous signs from the future" (Žižek 2012b: 134–35). Devoid of any sort of τέλος, inner or outer, the future is complete openness and indeterminability while at the same time bearing within it the crushed hopes of past failures and betrayed dreams (cf. Žižek 2008: 81).

I have a lot of sympathy for Žižek's reading of Hegel's dialectic of history, but I do not think it is faithful enough to Hegel's own intentions. That is to say, given three options for understanding history (the mechanistic, the processive or evental, and the tragic) Hegel's can only be a flawed version of (ii). My own is some combination of (ii) and (iii). Žižek would say that his reading is an example of what I advocate in this book, reading Hegel contra Hegel, and he might be right; that, even though Hegel did not understand his own philosophy of history to say that "there is no (great bright) future" (Žižek 2012b: 133), this idea is a powerful lure of thought in Hegel's work and as such should be played out. Following this lure of Hegelian contingency, what is "tragic" in Hegel's vision is not that the future is unknowable, then, but that it is free of *any* sort of teleology and therefore entirely up for grabs. We could debate if Hegel means something like this, and texts could be mustered either way; I strongly suspect that he does not. But if that debate were to occur, it would mark a serious step forward in Hegel studies, out of the miasma of talk of an end of history, and as such it would hardly matter who won that debate: Hegel would be vindicated either way. What stops me from embracing Žižek's reading of the Hegelian future is less my Hegelian membership card (and Žižek has been a member longer) and more my concentration on the weight of the past for all futural trajectories. Despite his talk of "crushed potentials," Žižekian historical freedom seems too Sartrean somehow, too "free," too cut loose from the historical or evental moorings which enable it to be what it is in the first place (that is, Žižek's Hegel is too "virtual," cf. Caputo's [2011: 57–58] criticism of Žižek). What Brown calls the "boundaries of our habitations" play a much greater role in the openness which the future offers than Žižek imagines. "Human historicity assures that inheritance is inevitable, and human finitude assures that inheritance is selective" (Brown 1994: 83). The selectivity of what we inherit from past evental sites – in part because the past is never given wholly but is always mediated, in part because we can choose which inheritances we embrace, and in part because we cannot so choose – is a powerful factor in the becoming of the future. There is never a sheer openness before us,

in fact. Žižek acknowledges this when he speaks of "ambiguous signs from the future" – but for him those signs come from the past, as when he (2009: 3) says that Marxism and psychoanalysis are the only theories that still engage the truth, or when Badiou (2012: 6) says in his portentously titled *The Rebirth of History* that "the sole Idea capable of challenging the corrupt, lifeless version of 'democracy' … is the idea of Communism." The signs are not ambiguous because they lack meaning. What makes the signs ambiguous is that we no longer have the shared practices and traditions by which to read them.

Can it still make sense to speak within Hegelian philosophy of history of an *Endzweck*, the outworking of a formal-final cause, rather than some transcendental given, or some temporal, external event? Hegel says "yes" quite clearly in his philosophy of history, where the application of his notion of the cunning of reason comes into its own (Hegel *VPW* 86–87):

> World history does not begin with a conscious end at all … World history begins with its universal end, that the concept of spirit [*der Begriff des Geistes*] will be fulfilled, only as it is in itself, i.e. as nature – it is the inward, the innermost unconscious drive [*der innere, der innerste bewußtlose Treib*] – and the whole business of world history, as you will recall, is the work of bringing this to consciousness … Furthermore, reason is immanent in historical being [*immanent in dem geschichtlichen Dasein*], in which and through which it achieves itself.

However telling Hegel's language is in this passage, particularly as it gives the lie to transcendental interpretations of the *Endzweck*, the significance of Hegel's statements to the effect that history is created by humankind (cf. Hegel *VPW* 50) is best seen when understood in terms of the cunning of reason. The inner drives of everyday regular people, as they play out their lives in meaningful and in trivial ways, add to the aggregate value of the world from which meaning is created. "The world soul that Hegel saw riding by in Jena was a soldier, not a Hegelian" (Schmitt 1988: 58). That is, for all of Hegel's talk of world-historical individuals, their careers depend entirely upon their ability to sway and mold and direct the aspirations – the spirits – of common folk who go about their lives in their own ways, along their own lines, and who are sometimes willing to see in "world-historical" people their own glimmerings of future possibility. These hopes may be misguided, they may be manipulated or pathological. They may also be genuine and affirming. But whatever they are, they are grist for the mill of reason in history. What else could they be, in an age when all gods have fled and hide their faces? There are no guarantees; there is only the process. And the process itself is all that there is.

What sort the process is and might be is the proper demesne of the philosophy of history. To revitalize the idea of a philosophical reading of history is to jettison its prophetic element, as well as its a priori posturing, and to take up the thankless task of looking back, sifting through the sands for traces of

a history that may be. What else remains? The totality of the process is the embrace of the event as it unfolds around us, through us, because of us, and despite us. Such a totality is an infinity, not a Lévinasian totality, though the ethics of the process may well be; that would depend upon the sort of relations that arise within the process. For Lévinas even *infinity* "leaves to the subject no refuge in its secrecy that would protect it against being obsessed by the other, and cover over its evasion" (Lévinas 1998: 144). Such an insistence upon the primacy of infinity has led commentators like Scott (1999: 225–26) to identify a violent or authoritarian strain in Lévinas's ethics. But this is a mistake. The inescapability of the process carries an ethical component, to be sure, but dovetails with the infinite responsibility for the other in Lévinas in that every processive/relational event is part and origin of every other processive/relational event. Infinite ethical responsibility has as its analogue an infinite ontological reciprocity, (contra Lévinas), defined by the event and not substance metaphysics. Responsibility and reciprocity are temporal, historical modes of being in the world, and as such are constitutive of the history that may be. In fact, the entirety of Lévinas's project of ethics as first philosophy could be mustered to the defense and explication of a more originary Hegelian philosophy of history, as long as (and only if) one took pains to come to terms with Hegel's backwards-looking hermeneutic of history. The infinity of the event which breaks out into the conscious relation with the Face of the other is itself of world-historical significance; it brings with it the consummated histories of the interlocutors which clash, interact, and conspire to remake the world anew in each evental encounter. The history of such a world, if made *actual* in a Hegelian sense, would perhaps be written with less blood than previous histories, though with no less loss. But perhaps not; history may only be written in reverse.

Finally, the cunning of reason is Hegel's dialogue with Heraclitus' arresting fragment, φύσις κρύπτεσθει φιλεῖ or "nature likes to hide" (DK 22 B 123), though Hegel never discusses this explicitly. Recall that Hegel claimed to have incorporated every insight of Heraclitus' thought into his own *Logik* (Hegel *Werke* 18:320), and the cunning of reason is a good example of what Hegel means. The Heraclitus fragment consists of three words (originally attributed with an added δὲ καθ' Ἡράκλειτος, "according to Heraclitus"), none of them unusual Greek. The first, φύσις, is traditionally translated "nature" but more accurately means the "stuff" out of which the cosmos is made, the substrate of which it consists. φύσις was the great concern of the observational science of the pre-Socratic Greek thinkers such as Thales, Anaxagoras, Parmenides, and Heraclitus. The latter's solution to the riddle of φύσις was to assert the eternity of change, like the flow of river water (ποταμοῖσι τοῖσιν αὐτοῖσιν ἐμβαίνουσιν ἕτερα καὶ ἕτερα ὕδατα ἐπιρρεῖ, DK 22 B 12), or movement (πάντα χωρεῖ, Plato, *Cratylus* 402a). There is no "stuff" at all; φύσις is not a "thing," it is a happening, an event. Because philosophers are looking for being or non-being

(metaphysical dualism) and scientists are looking for things or the absence of things (substance dualism), they cannot see φύσις for what it is: the process of becoming. φύσις κρύπτεσθει φιλεî – φύσις likes to hide, it is hard to see; a process metaphysic cannot be quantified in the same way as a substance metaphysic can be. Hegelian φύσις is "the inward, the innermost unconscious drive" alluded to above (Hegel *VPW* 86–87). In his lectures on Heraclitus Hegel says "the life of nature is the process of this moment" (Hegel *Werke* 18:330); everything beyond this is separation into being and non-being, but the event of sheer process is the moment of immanent becoming. It is here, in the possibility of the present moment, that what is cunning about reason finds its power. "The idea of an overturning whose origin would be a state of totality is imaginary," says Badiou (2005: 176). "Every radical transformational action originates *in a point*, which, inside a situation, is an evental site." The process of the moment is the evental site sheltering the life of nature which drives itself onwards and outwards. Far from being a blunt force of power across the *Schlachtbank* of human history, the cunning of reason is one of the only places in Hegel's philosophy where the power of what *may* be overcomes the power of what mutely *is*. The possibility and power of becoming slips beyond even Hegel's ability to rein it in; in the end, Hegel's least contingently understood doctrine becomes the place where unsurpassable possibility comes most to presence. There is no end, because there is nothing to end; only the ongoing dialectic, the give-and-take of the evental site.

9.2 Freedom and evil

Hegel's philosophy of history is a statement about freedom, progress, and possibility. Dangerous words, no doubt: freedom is contested in the *Philosophy of Right* between true *Freiheit*, which is a situated freedom in accord with reason, and license or *Willkür*. And what qualifies as progress is highly contested; is progress primarily economic? spiritual? artistic? political? or some combination of these, or perhaps nothing like any of them? Hegel, like Kant, understands autonomy (αὐτός + νομός, "self-law") to be a necessary condition for freedom. But Kant's is an individual autonomy which becomes practical within a kingdom of ends, whereas Hegel's is a social autonomy in which the self-reference of the will is only meaningful once we have a more thoroughly social notion of the self; the willing self is not a categorically autonomous self after all:

> The state in which the will decides something … is the *freedom* of the will. The complete self-reference of the will (even in its *object*) and freedom mean the same thing. As early as in Kant, freedom was independence from anything that differed from me. So freedom was complete *self*-dependence and *self*-determination. Never analyzing this, Kant simply accepted it … But Hegel tries to *say* what complete autonomy of the will

is, and it turns out that he must say more than Kant said about it. Complete autonomy is not only accepting and following the will's own law, but also involves requiring that there be a reality that corresponds structurally to the will's own structure … The intention of the will that wills itself is a reality that is of the will's own constitution. (Henrich 2003: 326)

The state of deciding *is itself* the state of being free, then. There is something deeply Stoic about this notion of freedom, especially in Kant. For example, Epictetus (*Enchiridion* §1) writes, "the things in our power are by nature free [ἐστι φύσει ἐλεύθερα], unhindered, unrestrained, but the things not in our power are weak, slavish, restrained, in the power of others." But surely such isolated freedom ignores the very situatedness of the willing self? If Heidegger (*SZ* §§25–26) is right, that every *Dasein* is a concernful *Mitda-sein*, that is, every being is a being-with, then we have to account for what Henrich calls "the reality that corresponds structurally to the will's own structure." That is, there has to be a world in which freedom can be realized, and such a world means that *Dasein* is never alone. "The need for limits is not a contradiction of freedom but is essential to it," says Smith (1989: 108). "Freedom does not imply a world ungoverned by any regulative principles but a world inhabited by subjects capable of supplying those principles themselves. Willing is not, then, an arbitrary activity, but already implies some minimal notion of a meaningful way of life within which willing and choosing can take place." Hegel acknowledges our concernful situatedness, and tries to describe what such a situatedness must be, because freedom depends upon it. As with Aristotle, we are free *because* of our situatedness, not *despite* it.

Freedom in a social sense has always been a difficult concept for liberal modernity. If the question is one of autonomy, how can this be reconciled with social requirements and civic norms? Are these not always heteronomous in a Kantian sense, and would Hegel not follow this line of argumentation as well? If an individual is constrained from free exercise of their actions in accord with the actions of others within society, is that not a limitation upon freedom? In Hegelian terms, this sort of freedom, and the dominant form of freedom in modernity, is a "negative" freedom, that is, a "freedom from" – from regulation, from external inhibitions, etc. There is no need to search Hegel's writings for examples of purely negative freedom, for "in the American context, it would seem as if many of Hegel's worst fears have occurred, where an atomistic freedom has permeated social life, and an economic 'bottom line' dominates most social decisions … Hegel not only celebrates the achievement of modern freedom, he also worries about its effects and excesses. Civil society is based on separation, but full freedom demands unity as well" (T. Luther 2010: 52). Henrich links together freedom and the will for both Hegel and Kant, and both theorists have in mind a larger ethical social structure that gives content to the will: Hegel's philosophy of right and Kant's kingdom of ends. Neither

Kant nor Hegel envisions an amoral free-for-all of actions. Hegel, however, associates the will and moral freedom within history in a way that Kant does not, indeed cannot. For an action to be categorically imperative it has to move beyond hypothetical needs and be rationally universalizable and therefore necessary. For Hegel, even were he to accept Kant's philosophical language here, such moral necessity can never come about in abstraction from the historical dialectic. Whatever happens, happens within and through history.

This has resulted in defining Hegelian freedom as some sort of historicist relativism (the same accusation that often arises against Aristotle's virtue ethics). I cannot attempt a reconciliation of Hegelian ethics with his philosophy of history at this point in this book. But this study cannot be brought to a close without detailing some aspects of Hegelian freedom, within history and the political realm, because the philosophy of history is supposed to announce the arrival of freedom for all ("*daß der Mensch als Mensch frei ist*," Hegel *VPW* 62). Freedom also has everything to do with the future, since it is *within* the future that freedom plays itself out from the given possibilities of the present moment. Freedom is also, one assumes, a prerequisite for actual progress in human life, whatever that might look like. In a commentary in *The Blue Cliff Record* on the kōan "Chao Chou's Cloth Shirt," one reads "if you cannot turn, wherever you set foot on the road you get stuck" (Cleary and Cleary 1992: 271). Freedom requires that we be able to turn on the road; progress requires that we know what path we ought to follow, and then have the will to follow that path. The inner trajectory of spirit as it works itself out in the world of human decisions is the manifestation of social freedom in the Hegelian sense. Progress along that trajectory is understood as *die List der Vernunft*, which is best conceived of as the internal teleological achievement of the formal-final cause of an action within history. Progress is only inevitable to the extent that the actual is rational, and moreover, progress is not automatically progress *forward* in time. In fact, some "progress" has been a *regress*; this is in large part a debate about the fate of modernity. For examples of some "regressive successes," take the return of communism as a viable disputant on the world stage in the post-Clinton/Blair/Bush era, or the rise of far-right political parties in Europe as a new face of national longing for cohesion and meaning, or the modern anti-modern Muslim movements as backlash against generic, imperialistic Western culture; even in philosophy, in *le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française* and the importance of St. Augustine for thinkers such as Derrida (1993), marginalized or surpassed views have come back in surprising ways. If this is progress, it is not forward-moving, whatever else it may be; it is rather the freedom to turn around in the road, when one realizes one has been moving in the wrong direction all along.

Whatever freedom is preserved in the progress of history is so because the realization of spirit, while ultimately guaranteed, does not follow any set plan

other than itself. In other words, the "plan" which Hegel references is simply that *spirit will out* – how this happens is completely dependent upon the vicissitudes of human activity in history. Therefore, all talk of progress in Hegel has to be qualified, and all discussion of *die List der Vernunft* has to be understood in this qualified sense. Progress is only a guaranteed commodity in the sense that Hegel's teleology has a definite immanent endpoint – the realization of freedom *within* history. "Progress" is a guaranteed end insofar as spirit does what spirit is wont to do; but "progress" as a definite pattern or a series of historical benchmarks (representational government, economic liberty, etc.) is another thing entirely. Though these are required in the *Philosophy of Right* (equality before the law, *Werke* 7 §§219–23; division of powers, §273; regulation of taxation, §299; press freedoms, §§316–19, etc.), no benchmark for progress as such exists in Hegel's philosophy except for the achievement of freedom, or the fulfillment of internal purposive autonomy. Hegel shows a debt to Herderian philosophy: "Because spirit is only as actual as it knows itself to be … in general the constitution of a particular people depends upon the manner and cultivation of its self-consciousness" (Hegel *Werke* 7 §274). All the usual means for measuring historical "progress," such as happiness (preferred by the Enlightenment and tied to reason), are for Hegel inadequate to the concept. It is for this reason that Hegel says that "the periods of happiness in it are the blank pages of history" (Hegel *VPW* 92). Happiness is an individual characteristic, it is freedom understood individually: "a man may be said to be happy when he has found harmony within himself" (*VPW* 92). But happiness is not to be looked for in history, not as an interpretive or evaluative concept.

Moreover, progress cannot carry any sense of triumphalism if it is tied to freedom, for freedom is universal rather than particular and is achieved within the arc of spirit which attends to a particular people or nation or state; one does not lord one's freedom over another if it is true freedom, because it is universal inheritance of spirit. Hegel was dubious of the entire claim of "progress" cited with such enthusiasm by the people of his age, romantic and revolutionary alike. Certainly there has been progress in freedom since Hegel's time, and even within his own lifetime; the French and American revolutions bear witness to this, and Hegel toasted the storming of the Bastille until the end of his life. However, the Terror in France, the European revolutions of 1848 (which Hegel did not live to see), and the continuance of slavery in the American states (Britain ended its slave trade in 1807 and abolished slavery in the Empire in 1834) stood as testimony that not all the work of freedom had been accomplished. Hegel never ceased to celebrate the spirit of the Revolution and considered the Terror to have been outside the spirit of the event, though his section in the *Phenomenology* on "Absolute Freedom and Terror" was a lengthy meditation, in part, on what "freedom" cut free from right rule can produce. Hegel also had a very high opinion of Napoleon, and spoke of him nearly always

with reverence in his lectures and writings. For example, Hegel says (*Werke* 12:533–34) that Napoleon "spread his liberal arrangements everywhere. No greater victories were ever won, no more brilliant maneuvers were ever conducted; and yet never was the impotence of triumph shown in a clearer light. The mindset of the people … finally brought low this mighty colossus; and in France once again a constitutional monarchy with the *Chartre* as its basis was established." The French people were unable to grasp the world-historical significance of what Napoleon had accomplished, but the accomplishment nevertheless remained. However, this is a far cry from imputing to Hegel the belief that this was the *final world-historical* event in the history of spirit. It was certainly an eternally significant event, and the axis around which Hegel's entire world turned. Hegel believed that "almost every modern state became open" to the spirit of the Revolution, namely *Liberalismus*. Nevertheless, "it became bankrupt everywhere" because "it is a false principle that the chains that bind right and freedom can be removed without the liberation of the conscience; that there can be Revolution without Reformation" (*Werke* 12:535).

Whatever triumph of the absolute Hegel may have envisioned for his philosophy, he was under no illusions about the process of bringing this to pass in the historical realm – at least not in his own, as a letter from 1820 demonstrates: "I am now about to be fifty years old, and I have spent thirty of these fifty years in these ever-unrestful times of hope and fear. I had hoped that for once we might be done with it. Now I must confess that things continue as ever. Indeed, in one's darkest hours it seems they are getting ever worse" (Hegel *Letters* 451). Such sentiments are not the thoughts of a world-historical philosopher secure in the knowledge that reason is progressing upon the predetermined pathway which his own philosophy had laid down for it. Personal letters can hardly be cited as definitive evidence that Hegel was less sanguine about progress and about the future than his critics give him credit for being. However, Hegel's sad tone is not to be found only in his letters. The tone of melancholy in the famous Preface to his *Philosophy of Right* is worth noting, for example. On the one hand, Hegel rejects the "cold despair which confesses that, in the temporal world, things are bad or at best indifferent, but that nothing better can be expected here" (*Werke* 7:27). At the same time, he is very careful to lay out the *limits* of philosophical speculation about history. Hegel writes, "a final word, then, on *teaching* the world how it should be: philosophy in any case always arrives too late to do this" (*Werke* 7:27–28). Philosophy, as "its own time comprehended in thought," has warrant to pronounce upon what has happened up to its own time, but can go no further. Because history is really real, as it were, and not an optional addendum to philosophical speculation, it is impossible to discuss the future prospects of history for the very simple reason that the future has not happened yet. The only guarantee that Hegel offers is *that* spirit will be realized in history: this he calls the "universal end" of history

(Hegel *VPR* 1:86). *How* spirit will be realized is yet to be determined; in fact, it has to determine itself via the cunning of reason. There is no "particular end" in sight, however, and this cannot be overemphasized, due to the immanent nature of the dialectic and *der innere, der innerste bewußtlose Treib* (Hegel *VPW* 87) which Hegel locates within historical spirit. As such, philosophy can only pronounce upon events that have already taken place, and only as they are presented to philosophy for analysis.

Herein lies the greatest difference between the Fichtean and Hegelian philosophies of history, as well as later versions that claim to stand with Hegel at the end of history. Fichte knows what is going to happen, and how it is going to happen, and precludes any novelty in his system by his claim to a priori knowledge. Hegel, too, knows what is going to happen – spirit will be realized – but he cannot tell us how it will come about, beyond telling us how it has come about *thus far*. The further teleology of spirit will advance dialectically, that is, through the becoming and suspension of new forms of the life of spirit, but the means and the motive of the dialectic await the subject matter upon which it will work itself out. Thus Hegel's most famous saying: "When philosophy paints its grey on grey, then has a form of life grown old, and with grey on grey it cannot be rejuvenated, but only recognized; the owl of Minerva begins its flight with the onset of twilight" (Hegel *Werke* 7:28). The fact that this is in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* has always fascinated me: it is as if Hegel were warning that this book is *not* Plato's *Republic*. Rather, it is the great Hegelian "what if" which Kierkegaard wished for in the Preface to the *Logik*, but which never came. Philosophy is not contingent for Hegel, and his metaphysics strives for necessity; Kierkegaard knew this, and despised it. It could never have been otherwise in a work such as the *Logik*. But history is another thing altogether. The owl of wisdom takes its flight not at the end of history (what could that even be?) but when all perceptions of history have been exhausted – this is why the light has grown dim, and the dusk metaphor is an apt one. "When Hegel speaks of the 'consummation' or 'completion' or 'coming to an end' or 'reaching the goal' of spirit … such pronouncements should be read as the fulfillment of the τέλος of a historical epoch, not of history or knowledge entire – a fulfillment which will give place to a new epoch, a new production and work of spirit" (Berthold-Bond 1989: 139). Many forms of life must grow old and die, as new ones spring to life; the owl of Minerva must launch into many flights, ere the pageant of history reaches whatever consummation does or does not await it: ecological collapse, the return of Christ, nuclear holocaust, the Omega Point, cosmic heat-death, the Big Bounce, technological singularity, more of the same, or any other mythic, cultural, technological, or scientific scenario one wants to entertain.

All of these scenarios, and a myriad others, require some account of loss. Because he cannot revert to some Fichtean notion of real history as unimportant

to the study of a priori philosophy, Hegel is faced with the problem of failure and loss in history. Suffering and failure are examples of what traditionally is considered "evil," and so fall within the purview of Hegelian philosophy of history as theodicy. Hegel cannot accept Fichte's answer to evil, that it is in fact secretly a good which serves a higher end (Fichte *SW* 7:14). Nor can Hegel, who speaks of the "slaughter-bench of history" upon which so much happiness, wisdom, and virtue has been sacrificed (Hegel *Werke* 12:35), accept the Augustinian idea of evil as nonexistent, a matter of non-being (Augustine, *City of God* XI §9). History is a real place, with real losses, and these losses have to be accounted for without glossing them over. Hegel's answer is that the losses are real, but that reason is able to use them to its own ends. As such, history is a zero-sum game in a sense, for even though there are real *finite* or temporal losses, reason suffers no loss of meaning or value. Even evil is a value-creating reality for the cunning of reason. Hegel therefore attempts to have it both ways; evil and suffering are real, and not necessary per se, but at the same time the meaning and value which is lost in the experience of evil is preserved as the cunning of reason uses it to its own ends. The particular does in fact matter to world history, because the particular is the *political*, but the political is not the absolute: "it is something finite, and as such it must vanish. Particulars struggle with one another, and a portion of them are thereby destroyed. But even in the struggle and downfall of particulars, the universal emerges. It is not disturbed" (Hegel *VPW* 105).

Hegel is hardly alone is such an assessment of the evils of history. No less a modern humanist than Ralph Waldo Emerson writes in his essay on Montaigne:

> We see, now, events forced on, which seem to retard or retrograde the civility of the ages. But the world-spirit is a good swimmer, and storms and waves do not drown him. He snaps his finger at laws: and so, throughout history, heaven seems to affect low and poor means. Through the years and the centuries, through evil agents … a great and beneficent tendency irresistibly streams. (Emerson 1983: 709)

Emerson's use of the term "world-spirit" is consonant with his own panentheism, which itself was deeply influenced by the German Idealism which Emerson readily imbibed, mainly through secondary sources. Emerson was deeply impressed with Hegelian philosophy, or at least Hegelian terminology. He had in fact read the Introduction to Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, and was greatly moved by the well-known "one, some, and all" idea of freedom which it suggested (Hegel *Werke* 12:31). From this, Emerson developed his own theory of historical development, including a Greek, a Christian, and a Modern era (Richardson 1995: 473–74). For Emerson the New England Transcendentalist as for Hegel the Swabian Idealist, the universal emerges even from the ruins of

history, but with a difference: in Hegel, there is no notion that reason plans the ups and downs of historical events. History is an unscripted reality in Hegel's philosophy, and the cunning of reason the means through which the universal and the particular meet, without losing what is essential to both. Even the cunning is backwards-facing, for it takes what it is given and molds it to its own ends. What it is given for the matter of its making, however, are the contingencies of history. It makes the best from what it has, and so muddles through.

With Hegel, philosophy takes a stand at the summation of events and declares with Martin Luther, "*Hier stehe ich und kann nicht anders. Gott helfe mir, Amen*." Philosophically, however, such an "amen" is provisional; it is a philosophical place-holder. The Hegelian "amen" partakes in both "it is finished" (John 19:30) as well as "let it be done" (Luke 1:38), and awaits the future coming of the spirit with a hopeful *μαρανα θα*, "Come quickly!" (1 Cor. 16:22; cf. Rev. 22:20). This small biblical phrase, a Greek transliteration from Aramaic, can be understood in at least two ways, both of which shed light on the Hegelian "amen" and the provisional consummation of history. In Aramaic the phrase is מרנאתא, which can be divided in two ways or left as it is (various editors of the New Testament have preferred one or the other depending upon context). If it is divided as מרנא תא or *marana tha*, it is a prayer for the coming of the Lord, "O Lord, come!" or "The Lord will come." In this sense, it indicates a future coming which is even now at hand, and which is longed for but proleptically realized in the here and now. It is an indication of future hope. However, if the phrase is read מרן אתא or *maran atha*, it is a credal statement "The Lord has come" or "the Lord is here," indicating a faith in the presence of the Lord as *Ἐμμανουήλ* or צמנואל, "God with us." It is a statement of present belief. Thus the phrase can be read "O Lord, come!" or "The Lord has come": the ambivalence is powerful, and speaks to an already/not yet realization of the consummation which is to come deep within the very here and now. Hegel's notion of spirit in history is much like this, and his religious usage of the notion *Endzweck* demands such a comparison. The failure of scholars to take Hegelian philosophy of religion seriously or their tendency to discount his theological themes entirely (or to note them only when they are explicitly theological, as in Hegel's so-called *Jungendschriften*) accounts, in part, for the misunderstanding of Hegel's language about *das Ende*. Make no mistake: *das Ende* is never the end for Hegel, because *das Ende* is never the end for Christian theology. Every end is a new beginning, and only secular eschatologies such as Kojève's mistake *das Ende* for an event in time rather than a process through time.

Another way to understand Hegel's concept of the end arises from hermeneutics. Gadamer insists that the basis for hermeneutics lies not in change per se, or in identity per se, but precisely within the purpose sought within change and identity. That is, between the slippage of a deconstructive hermeneutics of play which sees only the *ἀγών* of meaning within the interpretive moment, and

a romantic hermeneutic of retrieval dependent upon grasping authorial intent, there lies Gadamer's own linguistic turn. "Language … must not be thought of as merely changing, but rather as something that has a teleology operating within it" (Gadamer 1977: 13). The processive nature of language is described by another term Gadamer uses, *Zum-Stehen-Kommen* or "coming to a stand." The flux is temporarily stilled (not stopped), brought to a stand, and then spills over the cliff from the tension of use into the sea of new usage and new meanings. Gadamer says (1977: 13) "a definite articulation of the world is built up" and this building-up affects present and future interpretations. Gadamer takes the "coming to a stand" metaphor from Aristotle, who describes a rout after a battle. One person obeys the command to stop, then another, "until the original ἀρχήν is restored" (Aristotle *An. Post.* 100a13). Gadamer asks, "When does it actually stop, then? Suddenly it stands its ground again. Suddenly it obeys the command once again. A subtle pun is involved in Aristotle's description, for in Greek 'command' means *arche* [*sic*], that is, *principium*. When is the principle present as a principle? … This question is in fact the question of the occurrence of the universal" (Gadamer 1977: 14). The command (ἀρχήν) is the principle (ἀρχή) which the process obeys as it comes to a stand, and then flows onwards. "Coming to a stand" finds its cosmological counterpart in the Whiteheadian process concept of a field of force; that continuing influence into the eternal future of a given concrescing actual occasion. In hermeneutical terms, the field of force of a given actual occasion is also the influence of its inherited tradition. Language is the medium through which this influence moves, in hermeneutics, for both Gadamer and Whitehead. John Cobb (1982: 89) has referred to this continuing influence as a *trajectory*, which aptly describes the idea of an "aim" inherent in both process thought and Gadamerian preunderstandings. The field of force extends infinitely into the proleptically realized future, because it presents an infinite number of possibilities stemming from the present existential moment.

History comes to a stand in Hegel's philosophy of history; the ἀρχήν it obeys is the cunning of reason. The stand is a temporary halt in the flux, which gives it meaning at that time, in that place, within that context, but then drives onwards into the unrealized future. Based on his understanding of this historical *Zum-Stehen-Kommen*, Hegel stakes his claim to know what has happened, and why, *und kann nicht anders*. Hegelian philosophy does not know, and *cannot* know, what will happen, beyond being able to say that whatever happens will be the further outworking of spirit. The philosopher, then, is a reporter and an analyst, never a prophet, as Hegel never tired of pointing out. "History has only one aim, to perceive clearly what is and what has been, the events and deeds of the past" (Hegel *VPW* 27), and even though this aim "seems to contradict the function of philosophy" this is not so. Philosophy must not approach history in an a priori fashion, because that would arrest the flux of time in terms of an arbitrary

method or at an arbitrary moment; and make no mistake, however important a given moment may be (the Second Triumvirate in 43 BC; convocation of the Estates-General in 1789; the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989), no one moment in time could ever serve as *das Ende*, though all moments are moments of culmination. Following Hegel, if anything the future as such is unimportant for philosophy and therefore philosophy has no interest in proclaiming its end. For while history has to do only with the past, "philosophy, occupying itself with the truth, has to do with the eternally present. For it, everything that is past is refound, for *die Idee* is present, *Geist* is immortal, which means that it is neither past nor yet to come, but is essentially now" (Hegel *Werke* 12:105). The future must take care of itself: not because the *possibility* of any real novelty has been precluded by some final act of philosophical enlightenment, but because philosophy can have no actual insight into the *necessity* of its ongoing course, beyond knowing that it must go on, and that this going on is the outworking of spirit in the realization of freedom.

9.3 The future

Nowhere is this clearer than in Hegel's philosophy of history, as he deals with the course of spirit as it enters the New World of the Americas. Having outlined the progress of history from east to west, and having with his geographical metaphor pronounced Europe "essentially the end of history" (Hegel *VPW* 243), he suggests the further progress of history into the lands of the Western hemisphere. Hegel outlines the history of North and South America up to his own time, including its colonial histories and the relationships these regions have enjoyed since independence from their European founders. Hegel spends a fair amount of time discussing the revolution in the United States and comparing it (favorably) to the French Revolution. He then utters a pronouncement which serves as a powerful argument against the end of history thesis:

> America is consequently the land of the future, where, in some age which lies before us, the significance [*Wichtigkeit*] of world history will reveal itself, perhaps in a conflict between North and South America. It is a land of longing for all those who are bored with the historical armory [*die historische Rüstkammer*] of old Europe … America quit the soil from which hitherto world history has grown … and as a land of the future, generally it does not concern us here; because on this side of history, we have to do with what has been, and with what is. (Hegel *Werke* 12:114)

Though it has never been given its full weight of importance, not all contemporary scholars have neglected Hegel's discussion of the Americas. A notable, and early, exception to the neglect of this aspect of Hegel's philosophy is the work of the so-called Ohio Hegelians, a group of American philosophers who in the 1850s applied Hegel's theory of historical progress "to the struggles and

conflicts taking place around them … As immigrants from Germany and naturalized Americans, [John B.] Stallo, [Peter] Kaufmann, and [August] Willich were particularly sensitive to the problem of national and self-identity, and sometimes they were passionate about America's promise and destiny as a nation" (Easton 1966: 25). Surely such passion about America would have been out of place in so-called orthodox Hegelians who embraced their master's doctrines of "historical inevitability" and "Prussian supremacy?" In fact, as there was no such doctrine in Hegel's thought and never had been, these American Hegelians set about coming to terms with the movement of spirit in their own nation, for their own time, and on their own terms, with little or no concern for how it was "supposed to have been" in Europe. Stallo's *General Principles of the Philosophy of Nature* (1848) is a shamefully neglected work of American philosophy. It was the first American book to attempt a serious engagement with contemporary German philosophy and ranges widely across Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and particularly Hegel; Stallo outlines the basic argument and important terms in the *Phenomenology* and all three parts of Hegel's *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (logic, nature, and mind or spirit). Never once in the entire work does Stallo worry over some past or looming end of history, nor does he lament any ebb in spirit's development. Rather, "The Absolute Spirit, in which all things live … is the eternal *spirit, thinking itself* in nature and history. Its being is a *process*; but, since it is the absolute substance, a process which has itself both for its material and for its object or result. In dualizing itself, it yet remains in its eternal identity" and its fundamental stance "is *not repose, but activity*" (Stallo 1848: 332). *General Principles* was the work that introduced Emerson to Hegel's thought and especially Hegel's notion of the absolute, and through Emerson, in a profound quirk of history, Nietzsche. By taking Hegel at his word and trying to understand the movement of spirit in their young land, the Ohio Hegelians were far truer to Hegel's vision of history than the subsequent work of many other Hegelians – German, American, or otherwise.

More recently, G. A. Kelly offers a detailed argument *against* reading the Americas as some further possible home for spirit. According to Kelly, for Hegel the Americas were still part of the Protestant European legacy and thus their time had already passed, but this is not his main argument. Kelly writes, "Hegel gives two substantive reasons why the destiny of America cannot be of profound interest: (1) it lies in a future that no historical research can penetrate; and (2) it presents no features that would appear to illuminate the philosophy of history" (Kelly 1972: 3). Kelly refuses to separate out Hegel's notion of the progress of *die Idee* from the advance of the state as such, and so understands that spirit and state must be kept together in Hegel's political thought. He also points out that for Hegel an American "cannot be a *citoyen* because he is not yet incorporated into a valid state. He finds his being in the

most primitive and individualistic rudiments of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*" (7). Kelly devotes the remainder of his rich essay to an analysis of contemporary American historical development in terms of Hegel's notions of the state from the *Rechtphilosophie*. Over and over again, Kelly shows that America has not in fact become the Hegelian state of the future. I find myself in complete agreement with Kelly's (and with Hegel's) analysis of America. The problem with all this lies in the fact that Kelly has information that Hegel did not have; that is, Hegel's future is present for Kelly. He knows what *did* happen; Hegel could not have known this, and would have adamantly refused to forecast it. In fact, the two points that Kelly adduces in argument *against* the future course of spirit in the Americas are not arguments against the future course of spirit, but in fact *support* my argument about Hegelian philosophy of history. Because the destiny of America "lies in a future that no historical research can penetrate," Hegel in his philosophical anti-prophetic vein must refuse to speculate upon it: not because nothing *could* ever happen of any interest, but simply because nothing had happened as yet. The future is not philosophy's to delineate. This also is why America "presents no features that would appear to illuminate the philosophy of history" for Hegel. Of course: the future course of spirit *cannot* be illuminated. Kelly does not prove that spirit could take no future course in the Americas according to Hegel. At best he demonstrates that in fact history *did not* take a course that Hegel would have recognized as an advance in spirit – a point with which I concur.

Michael Inwood is also typical of the trend to marginalize Hegel's comments on the Americas, and takes a much more "end of history" approach than Kelly: "If Hegel makes spirit entirely transparent to itself, then it follows that history, or at least interesting history, is at an end. The problem with the suggestion that America is the land of the future is not that we cannot predict what will happen there, but that there is nothing left to happen there" (Inwood 2002: 516–17). Such is the reading of Hegel's history one is likely to arrive at if one assumes up front that Hegel believes history has come to an end in his thought. It is a classic example of presuppositions getting in the way of a close reading of Hegel's work, for plainly it is not the case that Hegel believes "that there is nothing left to happen" in America. Bertrand Russell gives a more accurate reading. For all his contempt for Hegelian thought, Lord Russell accurately points out that Hegel does not believe in the end of history; Russell gets Hegel wrong, and *still* manages to get him right:

> So much is Germany glorified that one might expect to find it the final embodiment of the Absolute Idea, beyond which no further development would be possible. But this is not Hegel's view. On the contrary, he says that America is the land of the future, "where, in the ages that lie before us, the burden of the world's history shall reveal itself – perhaps [he adds characteristically] in a contest between North and South America." (Russell 1945: 738–39)

Hegel's silence about the progress of history in America or elsewhere results only from his conviction that philosophy has to be silent about that which has yet to happen. Philosophy is always backwards-looking for Hegel, which is why it is systematizing. And as backwards-looking, it is never in a position to offer a final word: "If world history is also the world court, then it is a process without a last instance and without a definitive, disjunctive judgment" (Schmitt 1988: 56). Hegelian philosophy strives for the grand synthesis of all that has been; it cannot anticipate what will be, except to say that what will be, will be *more freedom*, however conceived.

Frankly, it is difficult to understand the misguided course of Hegel scholarship on the matter of the end of history, once one has given Hegel's historical account of the New World its fair weight (one philosopher who was aware of Hegel's pronouncements on the New World as "essentially undeveloped" though open for development, and was deeply critical of them, was Ortega y Gasset [1995: 80–81]). However much Hegel "should have" ended history, as Nietzsche said he should have, the plain fact is that not only did Hegel not announce his philosophy as the end of history, but he goes so far as to say that history had yet to develop itself fully in the New World. There is no indication that Hegel envisioned the future course of spirit to be only the "world-historical rondo" which Nietzsche suggested (Nietzsche *Werke* 3:1:304–5). On the contrary, true to his historico-philosophical principles, Hegel announced that the progress of spirit in the New World and elsewhere was beyond the bounds of speculation, and turned to the world that he did know, namely the world of spirit as he imagined it from its dawn in the east to its evening in the west. His geography of spirit loses its way, as metaphors often will. It will not bear the weight of actual history, and to bind Hegel to it as to some sort of self-imposed Procrustean bed is to misunderstand the principles of Hegelian philosophy of history. Strangely, Hegel does seem to have been able to free himself somewhat from his linear geography of spirit as attested in a letter written at the same time that he was working on the history lectures. In this letter, he breaks his strictly east-to-west phenomenology by speculating upon the future world-historical "higher destiny" of Russia, saying that she "undoubtedly bears within her womb" the potential development of spirit (Hegel *Letters* 569). Will spirit cease her western way and turn again to the east, reversing the poetic turning and direction of Hölderlin's hymn *Der Rhein* (Hölderlin *KSA* I:149, lines 32–45 and 76–90)? Given the possibility of Russia and the unambiguous statements about the world-historical future of the Americas, it is clear that Hegel felt that the evolution of freedom still had possibilities which waited for it in a future yet to be decided.

All of the talk in the West at the turn of the new century was that the coming age would belong to China, a possibility that Hegel could never have foreseen but which might have pleased his penchant for circles. After all, if China was

the utter beginning of history, why not the utter end as well? Philosophers cannot be prophets, but I take heart in Eric Li's prognosis as he dons that mantle: "China will continue to rise, not fade. The country's leaders will consolidate the one-party model and, in the process, challenge the West's conventional wisdom about political development and the inevitable march toward electoral democracy. In the capital of the Middle Kingdom, the world might witness the birth of a post-democratic future" (Li 2013: 35). If China is true to its Confucian soul, there is no reason Li's forecast should not come about, and no reason why it cannot be accounted for in Hegelian terms. Hölderlin's Rhine ran to the west after its brief flirtation, but why not a new eastern rise of spirit in one of the oldest and most cultured civilizations in world history? During the era of National Socialism, Karl Jaspers certainly thought such a thing was a possibility, and hoped for it (Dale 2010: 29–32). One could argue that Hegel's talk about Russia and the East means that he thinks that it might well *catch up* with the West, and that the birth of spirit there might only be a further universalization of spirit. This seems unlikely, though, since Hegel always only hints at *new* developments when he talks about the future of Russia. China would have surprised him. Another little-explored aspect of this east–west interaction is Heidegger's statement in 1966 of the possibility of a healthy relationship with technology in the future in precisely these nations, i.e. the USA, China, and Russia: "Meanwhile there are in the USA some stirrings of efforts to get away from pragmatic-positivistic thought. And who of us can say whether or not one day in Russia and China the ancient traditions of a 'thought' will awaken which will help make possible for man a free relationship to the technical world?" (Heidegger 2003: 43). The USA is a lost cause, and Russia seems mired in an overt kleptocracy. China offers only a glimmer of hope, but again, *only* if it can bring new wine out of Confucian wineskins. China's hope must be a Confucian hope. That is for the future.

It is undoubtedly true that Hegel believed that the final *possibility* of absolute freedom had been achieved in his lifetime and within his own philosophy (all the talk about "man as such" being free in the Germanic states of Christian Europe points to this, if nothing else). That is, the structure of spirit's attainment of freedom is the structure Hegel describes in his philosophy, however that attainment plays itself out. I think it equally clear that scholars who believe in the end of history are forced to locate it here, since nowhere outside of his shaky geographical metaphor will Hegel mention it. Like Nietzsche and Engels, modern scholars are forced to read the end of history as an implication of Hegelian philosophy, or abandon the notion altogether. Only when absolute freedom is *necessarily* universal would it make any sense at all to speak of an end of history as *actual history*, and this has not occurred; indeed it could never occur as such given the very nature of the ongoing, processive dialectic. But this ties into another disputed topic, Hegel's idea of the *end of philosophy*.

Here, possibility is enough. He writes, "Every philosophy has been and still is necessary … What has been refuted is not the principle of this philosophy, but only that this principle is the absolute final determination" (Hegel *Werke* 18:56). Wisdom (1940: 252) believes that Hegel's problem is not that he cannot account for further advances in history, but that "he cannot account for the rational necessity of post-Hegelian philosophy." While these issues are obviously linked, Hegel *did* understand his thought as the "end of philosophy" in the sense that he had discovered the highest category of thought once and for all. But there is no reason to believe that Hegel thought further work on the contents of that category could not and would not continue, and that that work would obviously continue within history. Hegel's claim that his philosophy of history offers a philosophical theodicy is less concerned with his supposed pronouncements about the end of history, and more with his belief that he offered an adequate philosophical explanation for the absurd and irrational. It may be that Derrida (1982: 79) offers the most accurate assessment: "thought still has a future, or even, as it is said today, is still entirely to come because of what philosophy has held in store; or, more strangely still, that the future itself has a future." Thought, history, the future itself has a future, but the question of those futures is unanswerable, because the reflexive and deferred nature of human knowing does not and cannot have access to such a future.

The claim to offer a theodicy bookends the lectures on the philosophy of history (it appears in the opening and final sections of the work), though there is little in the body of the lectures themselves about evil and suffering as a philosophical matter. This suggests that Hegel understood his lectures as a theodicy on a structural or theoretical rather than a practical level. Hegel does not much deal with individual tragedies or historical events which elicit theodicies in his philosophical account of history. In part, this is because philosophical history for Hegel does not have to do with individuals, but with "the sum total of all possible perspectives" (Hegel *VPW* 32). Some of Hegel's hardest statements in the philosophy of world history have to do with individuals, such as: "The individual may well be treated unjustly; but this is a matter of indifference to world history, which uses individuals only as instruments to further its own progress" (*VPW* 76). Emerson, himself influenced by Hegel, laments, "Why are the masses, from the dawn of history down, food for knives and powder? The idea dignifies a few leaders … but what of the wretches whom they hire and kill? The cheapness of man is every day's tragedy" (Emerson 1983: 629). Hegel's well-known doctrine of the "world-historical individual" who personifies the movement of spirit for an entire epoch, such as Caesar or Bonaparte, should be included within this discussion. Marcuse warns (1999: 232), "Even these men of history, however, are not yet the actual subjects of history … They are victims of a higher necessity, which acts itself out in their lives; they are still mere instruments for historical progress." Yet surely these very considerations – the

use and abuse of individuals, the losses incurred in the march of history and the injustices suffered by individuals, as well as nations and states, in the face of claims to reason and purpose in history – are the reasons why theodicies are necessary in the first place? Hegel is aware of this, and yet claims that all these things are done in his philosophy of history *in the name of reason itself*, though only figuratively done by any particular actor (recall that God, spirit, the cunning of reason: these are not transcendent "things," but rather ways of speaking about how the process processes). The process is said to be rational: for that reason alone, Hegel has to account for the existence of evil in history.

Evil is a philosophical and ethical affront to human freedom, which Hegelian philosophy sees itself as uniquely proclaiming. Whatever theological language Hegel employs, history is all of a piece with human misery and is a manifestly human reality. "One may form all kinds of conceptions of the kingdom of God, as long as it remains a kingdom of spirit that is realized in humans and which depends upon them for its existence" (Hegel *VPW* 50). Human freedom (autonomy, existing in and for itself) and spiritual freedom (the freedom of the spirit) are one and the same thing, and develop together or not at all. Moreover, Hegelian freedom is the absence of contingency (*die Zufälligkeit*), and "contingency must vanish on the appearance of philosophy" (Hegel *Werke* 18:55), even the ultimate contingency in life and history, evil. Hence "for Hegel contingency … is our most effective *memento mori* and thus the most significant obstacle in the search for necessity and meaning in the life of historical man" (Wilkins 1974: 143). The existence of evil is more than a moral dilemma in Hegelian philosophy. Evil is an epistemological problem for Hegel, because it poses a threat to the continuation of spiritual freedom and the rationality of the plan. Evil is a manifestation of separation, Hegel says, and so the primal myths of religion enshrine the basic dichotomies of goodness/innocence and evil/knowledge in such a way that separation is overcome only through a divine act. The justification of evil (theodicy) literally has to do with *θεός* and *δίκη*; it is a justification of God. Such a claim becomes increasingly difficult for Hegel to credibly maintain, the more his philosophical language becomes theological, for he has placed his system squarely within one of the most vexed issues in the philosophy of religion: in what sense is God good? Saying "spirit" or "the plan" or "reason" in the place of "God" does not soften the question. Peter Hodgson, a committed Hegelian theologian of the first rank, puts this starkly: "What is the absolute *Sache* of history? In religious terms, it is simply 'the glorification and honor of God (*die Verherrlichung Gottes und seiner Ehre*).' God is the end of history, and God is present in history as an 'absolute history'" (Hodgson 2012: 176). But if *God* is the end of history, an entirely separate problem opens before us.

Could God be the problem for the philosophy of history after all? "The aim of knowledge is to attain to the deeper insight that the purposes of eternal

wisdom emerge not only from the ground of nature, but from the ground of the spirit which is real and active in the world," according to Hegel. "In view of this fact, our investigation is a theodicy, a justification of God" (Hegel *Werke* 12:28). Evil is bound up with the philosophical problem of contingency and the loss of freedom, and awareness of this loss in history elicits the need for justification. For Hegel, freedom which fully manifests reason could never be subject to contingency, for rational means and ends would coincide perfectly. Evil as contingency means that humans are not actually free; Hegel must explain evil if freedom, and reason, are to be fully and completely realized (that is, if the rational is to become actual, and the actual, rational). "In order that the evil in the world be comprehended, thinking spirit should be reconciled with its ills" (*Werke* 12:28). Theodicies stand *in terminus res* and arise because of antinomies within the traditional theistic view of providence. They are backwards-looking, and strive for explanatory value in the face of what is taken to be the basic goodness or at least regularity and orderliness of the world. Hegel's characterization of his lectures as a theodicy is a consistent attempt on his part to maintain his immanent telotheology, wherein God and the world reach fulfillment with each other and within each other ("Without the world God is not God," Hegel *Werke* 16:192). Since evil is a historical problem, it is a divine problem as well (and vice versa; all divine problems are historical problems). If Hegel is going to maintain both an immanent and a transcendent view of God within history, and at the same time insist that evil is a historical problem, he will have to reconcile the ideas of evil and God in some fashion. Because Hegel is committed to both horns of the theodic dilemma (omnibenevolence and omnipotence, though radically historicized in a uniquely Hegelian manner) and insists on using God-language, it seems impossible for him to escape from the theodic paradox of a God that indeed works in mysterious ways, but leaves far too many corpses in his wake to be anything but a monster. Is there a dialectical overcoming that can surmount this terrible mystery? Is there any possible way out?

To put it plainly, I think Hegel cannot escape the paradox, and his theodicy fails, as do all theodicies. However, I have not defended Hegel against the misinterpretations of his philosophy of history only to dismiss finally the very purpose of that history, the reconciliation of God with history (though I have little sympathy for the ontotheological way that Hegel proposes to solve that problem). My suggestion here at the conclusion of this study is that we should juxtapose Hegel's failed theodicy with his *lack* of an end to history, in order to point out a fundamental tension in his thought, the tension between contingency (*die Zufälligkeit*) and determinacy (*die Bestimmtheit*). Or, put another way, the tension between Hegel's desire to see contingency overcome at all costs (e.g. Hegel *VPW* 29), and his determination to hold the system open at the very places where one would expect it to close. Hegel knows the system

has to stand as a culmination if it is to be what he envisions it to be, but at the same time he insists that philosophy cannot be in the business of foretelling the future, and that there are directions and meanings that spin out into the future and subvert any and all attempts at closure: "prophecy is not the business of the philosopher" (*VPW* 210). The philosophy of total mediation has its limits, so Hegel cannot declare history to have ended, nor can he offer a final explanation of historical or divine evil. This is what Derrida (1997 [1976]: 26) means when he says that "Hegel is *also* the thinker of irreducible *différence*." The slippage and deferral of meaning is the sand in the oyster, the irritation which is the goad. Without this ἀγών, the process stagnates. Hegel privileges violent ἀγών too often in his philosophy of history (revolutions, wars, individual suffering) but he is not alone in seeing the great turning points of history as the times of violence, and sadly he is correct to say that times of peace are the blank pages of history. But whatever the grist for the mill – violence, peace, prosperity, enlightenment – the mill must have it. Hegel's *speculative* philosophy, in which all loose ends are tied up and all evils are set right in the outworking of absolute spirit, is also a *dialectical* philosophy, which only advances when there is conflict and resolution. But does this *justify* the sufferings of the world? Never. What could?

According to Gadamer, "No one should take upon himself the task of measuring all that has come down to us in the great heritage of Hegelian thought. It ought to be enough for each person to be the heritage himself and to give an account of what he has received from this inheritance" (Gadamer 1996: 38). This study of Hegel's historical thought is my attempt at giving such an account. In a forthcoming work I will take up the task of exploring the theodic question in Hegel, which deserves more attention than it receives here. Let it suffice to say this: because Hegel gives divine providence an immanent, this-worldly quality, a final reckoning in his philosophy for the work of divine providence *cannot be had outside of history itself*. Since history can and will continue (not just events, but the development of the progress of spirit in concrete forms), such an accounting cannot be made, and thus evil can only be provisionally accounted for, if at all, and not finally, as Hegel wishes to imply. On the one hand, Hegel offers no account of his philosophy being the end of history, or of being able to say how history will work itself out in the future. On the other hand, his failure to offer a summation of history is an impossible problem for his claim that his philosophy of history functions as a theodicy, since theodicies as traditionally understood cannot be provisional but must deal with necessity. Finally, the tension between διαλεκτική (dialectic, nature, a process of conflict) and θεωρία (speculation, spirit, a vision of totality) cannot be overcome in Hegel's philosophy, and his philosophy of history can dispel neither historical (natural) nor theological (spiritual) contingency. Croce was right after all: Hegel cannot overcome this dualism at the heart of his thought.

However, this is not because of a "grave logical error" (Croce 1915: 201), but rather goes to the heart of what a successful speculative dialectic must be. Contingency and necessity are not forces to reconcile, and if a philosophy has to remain open-ended, this is no great loss. Hegel would view this as a flaw, but surely it is among the greatest strengths of his thought, one that allows every generation to return to it with new questions and to come away with new answers. How many philosophers have achieved so much in so grand a failure? The message of the end of history is that, given the centrality of history, there *is* no end; and whatever *ends* are achieved, they are human achievements which partake of the collective efforts of humanity's interactions with the divine, the mundane, the awful, and the wonderful.

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In order to facilitate the widest possible scholarly use of this work, references to the major subjects of this study are usually cited in the original-language editions of their standard collected works, unless otherwise noted. I have almost always retranslated, unless noted. Standard English translations are listed below. Roman numerals in the text and notes refer to volumes, where appropriate, and unless otherwise noted. Dates refer to the edition cited, not necessarily to the year of original publication (either in original language or in translation). The major figures of this study are given in the order in which their respective chapters appear. Secondary and other sources follow, alphabetically.

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